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BY MRS. GORE,

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ETC. ETC.

That man, though in rags, who is capable of deceiving indolence into wisdom, and who, while professing to amuse, aims at reformation, is more useful to society than twenty cardinals in all their scarlet, tricked out with the fopperies of scholastic finery.

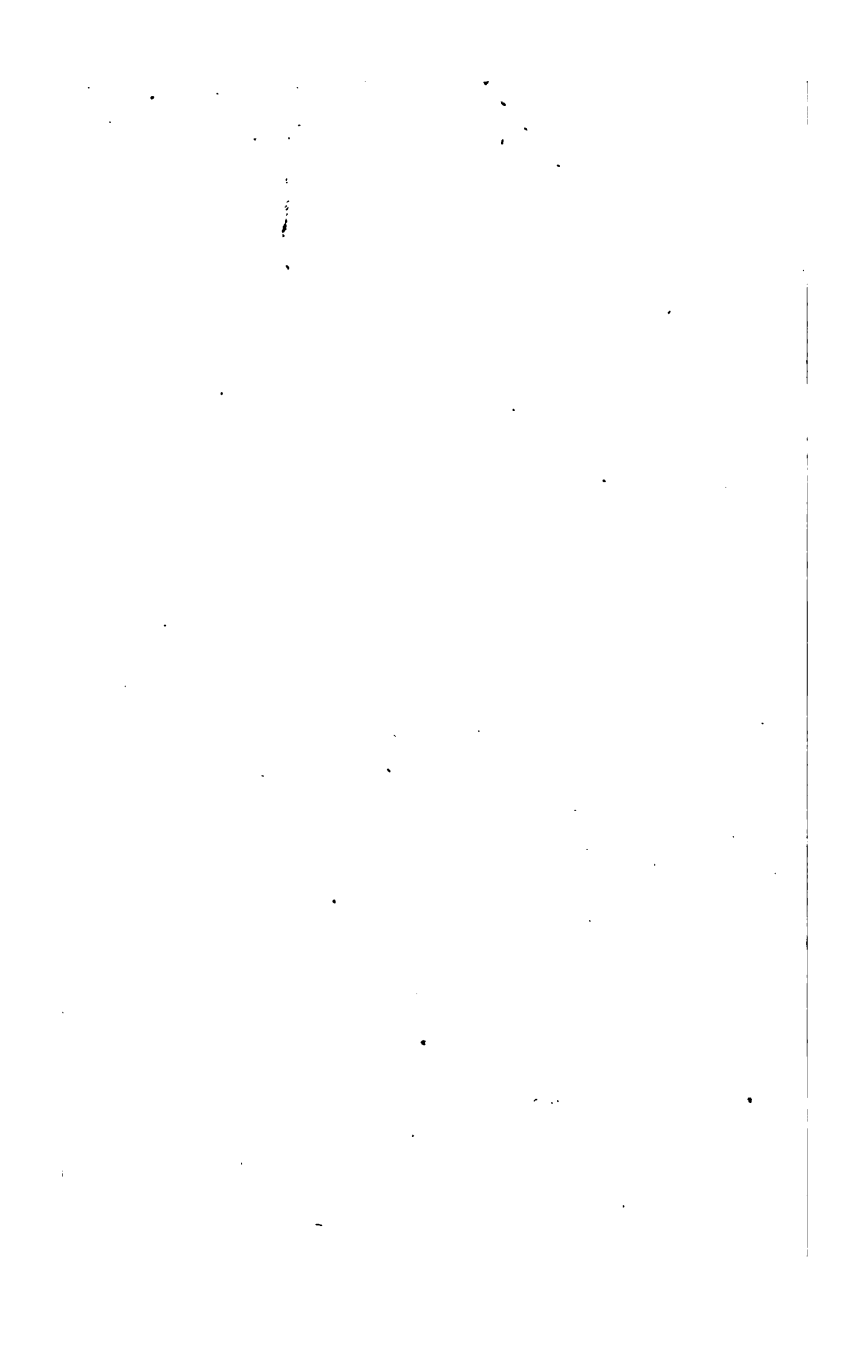
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But if indebted to his hereditary honours for the advantage of admission into the more dignified tea-drinkings and whist-playings of Tunbridge Wells, William Egerton had also to reproach them with the evils of a premature and improvident marriage. Lord Tiverton's second son had committed the not very rare indiscretion of marrying the daughter of his tutor ! In placing his two younger encumbrances under the care of his chaplain, Dr. Spry of Helstone Parsonage, his lordship had thought it necessary to state that, as their fortunes would not exceed twenty thousand pounds, they must be prepared by a solid education to make their way in the world ; and though it cannot be supposed that the learned divine's blindness to the attentions of his pupil William to his daughter Olivia was either wilful or interested, Lord Tiverton was harsh enough to assert, on learning their engagement, that a son of his with even half the money was a match to have been eagerly caught up by a Miss Olivia Spry.

But though the Earl might storm, he was unable to disinherit. The rights conferred by that charter of filial disobedience, a marriage settlement, were immutable ; and, in defiance of his patron's indignation, the old doctor, who could give nothing else to the young couple, bestowed upon them the nuptial benediction.

Lord Tiverton had certainly some cause for displeasure. The Mentor he had so unwisely selected for his son, too intent upon advancing the interests of his daughter to bring the charms of the tuneful nine into competition with those of Miss Olivia, had forborne to irritate his future son-in-law by drilling him into even a moderate degree of scholarship. The young lover was fated to grow an old dunce ; and, in addition to the annoyance inflicted upon his family by his precocious marriage, William Egerton signified to Lord Tiverton, who abounded in church property and ministerial patronage, that he was too conscious of his deficiencies, and too well satisfied with his pretty wife and moderate income, to derange his little household by completing his education at the University. Lost in uxorious ease, he seemed to luxuriate in the prospect of becoming a nobody ; and the Earl shuddered at the thoughts of the poor, mediocre, indolent, obscure, useless, Honourable Mr. Egerton, of whom he saw himself condemned to acknowledge himself the father. His letter, forbidding the offenders ever again to approach the gates of Tiverton Castle, was a model of paternal eloquence.

Disappointed in the expectation of shining in fashionable life, instilled into her mind by a worldly-minded father and elder sister, young Mrs. Egerton resigned herself to the projects of domestic happiness suggested by her husband. Instead of the house in town and presentation at court, hitherto inseparable in her imagination from an alliance with the son of an earl, she gradually tamed down her ambition to a long lease of Hurley House, near Tunbridge Wells, within twenty miles of her father's parsonage ; and

retired thither with her husband to cultivate economy and their spreading olive branches, in measureless content.

But in this modest sphere of life, the Egertons became happier and more valuable people than if their original object had been accomplished, of contending, amid the turmoil of London, with the follies of their equals in birth and superiors in fortune. With an unexceeded income, good health, and good temper, they experienced none of the heartburnings which end in domestic bickerings and public contempt. Neither envy nor strife embittered their cheerful fireside. Egerton amused himself by cultivating the twenty acres of land and old-fashioned gardens attached to Hurley House; while Olivia, who in a gayer circle would have frittered away her days in novel-reading and superficial accomplishments, became a notable housewife, an active mother, and a benevolent neighbour. It was impossible to be better kind of people than the Egertons; and, except that Olivia found herself honoured with the right hand corner of the sofa in the various cottages of gentility scattered in the environs of the Wells, and that it was impossible to overlook the pompous superscription of the letters occasionally addressed to her by her sister, Miss Rachel Spry, she would scarcely have remembered her style and title of "Honourable."

The well-being of the contented little family was destined, however, to vicissitude. Some domestic crisis or other in the house of Egerton—the dangerous illness of the Earl—an entail to be cut off, or the loss of a younger daughter—no matter what—at length induced Lord Tiverton to relent, unsolicited, in favour of the happy couple at Hurley House; and the Egertons not only received a free and voluntary pardon, but were invited to spend a month at the Castle. As if resolved, however, to tax to the utmost the graciousness conceded, they decided that it was impossible to undertake a journey of two hundred miles, leaving their children to the care of menials; and, to the horror of the Countess, who had barely summoned up patience to welcome her plebeian daughter-in-law, it was found necessary to fit up a nursery for the reception of four healthy, riotous, grandchildren. Her own married daughter, the Marchioness of Easthampton, when invited to Tiverton, never took the liberty of bringing her progeny; the Countess's grand-maternal partiality being notoriously reserved for the two handsome boys of her eldest son, Lord Egerton; and Mrs. William's rash act served of course to consign her anew to disgrace.

Throughout the visit, herself and her family were constantly talked at by her harsh and overbearing mother-in-law. It was misery to her kind heart to see the children mewed and hushed up in their aristocratic prison, debarred their usual indulgence of shouting, singing, and quarrelling, to their hearts' content; and she could scarcely conceal her sympathy in the exultation of her old nurse, who, on the last day of their sojourn at the Castle, went flouncing up and down the corridors, with audible ejaculat-

that, "thank God, the poor dear babes were now going to a place where they would be treated like Christians."

But the old nurse was no wiser than became her calling. At Helstone Parsonage, whither the Egertons repaired immediately after their visit to the Castle, the little Egertons, instead of being treated like Christians, were worshipped as divinities. Old Dr. Spry almost respected his daughter's offspring, as being also the grandchildren of an earl; and lightly as she was held, and irreverently used, by the Egerton family, fancied she had advanced herself in the world by allying herself beyond her natural sphere.

In his youth, the doctor had officiated as domestic tutor to the sons of the Duke of Pelham; and on receiving in requital for his services the living of Helstone, had retired from office by marrying the governess of his grace's daughters, of whom the Countess of Tiverton was one. His subservience to the great was consequently an official failing. He stood in humble reverence of the peerage in general, and any one pertaining to his patron in particular; and if he had adventured the resentment of Lady Tiverton by making her ladyship's son his son-in-law, it was chiefly through undue estimation of the young gentleman's importance in the world. The ex-tutor had not the self-denial to allow what he considered the glorification of his family to slip through his hands.

Even after William Egerton had been cast off by his family, and while he was still labouring under his father's anathema, Dr. Spry never failed to comfort Olivia with assurances, that, "for a man so highly connected as Lord Tiverton's son, sooner or later something must be done." He seemed to fancy that Providence or government would rain down mitres or full-bottomed wigs upon poor Egerton, while hoeing his turnips or getting in his hay at Hurley House.

But now that a partial reconciliation was effected with the Earl, Dr. Spry's elation knew no bounds; and, as Olivia had too much regard for the feelings of her family to relate at the parsonage the treatment she and her children had received from the Tivertons, her father and sister were prompt in suggesting new schemes of ambition for the aggrandizement of the younger generation at Hurley House.

"I trust, my dear Livy," said the old gentleman to Mrs. Egerton, "that you did not neglect the opportunity afforded by spending six weeks in Lord Tiverton's house, to get something done for the boys?—His lordship, my dear, has *wonderful* patronage! It was said, when he married Lady Alicia Pelham, that he had three thousand a year in the church! There was a time, indeed, when it seemed likely some of his lordship's preferment might fall my way. But poor William's unlucky attachment—(ahem!)—I don't mean to reproach you, my dear,—more especially if you have been wise enough to secure something for your sons."

"The boys are still so young," pleaded Mrs. Egerton.

"John is in Ovid, my dear. It is high time his future interests should be considered."

"I fear, poor fellow, he did little to advance them during his stay at Tiverton! It was such sad confinement for him at the Castle, that, whenever he *could* manage to make his escape, he was off with the keepers; and William was foolish enough to boast one day at dinner that the boy was a capital shot, and had that morning bagged two brace of pheasants! Now you know, that if there is a thing on earth about which Lord Tiverton is particular, it is preserving his game. I thought we should never have heard the last of poor John's unlucky feat!"

"It ought, on the contrary, to have convinced his lordship that the lad is of an age to be provided for. What has the Earl to do with his preferment? Lord Egerton has only two sons, one of whom will succeed to the estate, and the other to the borough. What the deuce is the church to *them*?"

"Lord Egerton has several daughters,—his youngest child, you know, is only a year old; so that he may still have abundance of younger sons to enter the clerical profession."

"The more reason for nailing Lord Tiverton for one of his livings while you have a chance."

"At present, I fear, we are scarcely on sufficiently good terms to propose such a thing. Besides, how are we ever to afford the boys a college education?"

"Leave that to me, Livy!" cried the old doctor, warmed to the utmost expansion by seeing himself, in his mind's eye, grandfather to the future rector of the rich living of Wyndham, "the Reverend John Egerton—archdeacon, dean, bishop—archbishop," who could say? And from that day he most unexpectedly took upon himself the expense of maintaining little Jack at Winchester, as an initiatory step to qualify him for the dignities of the buzzwig!

Fathers are proverbially said to be blind; but grandfathers do not always distinguish themselves by their perspicacity. The eldest boy, selected by Dr. Spry by right of primogeniture to become a learned divine, was of Egerton's three sons decidedly the least qualified for the distinction. John Egerton grew up a good-humoured, good-looking, popular lad, the image of his father; and, consequently, very far from disposed to fag for a degree or pretend to a living.

Julius, the second son, on the contrary, who, being less robust than his brothers, had spent his childhood at Helstone Parsonage and his boyhood at a country foundation-school in its vicinity, for the advantages of the wholesome breezes of the Sussex coast, was a shy, reserved child, of whom his preceptors predicted wonders; and, though much of the admiration excited by his schoolboy verses might arise from want of the competition which would scarcely have allowed them to pass current at Eton, as well as from his being, as the son of the *Honourable* Mr. Egerton ⁽¹⁾

phoenix of the country schoolmaster ; his aunt, Miss Rachel Spry, and all the tabbies of her tea-table, foresaw in him an embryo Heber, and proclaimed a future Milman. It was already a source of deep affliction to the officious spinster that her favourite nephew was not destined to the vest and cassock, in place of his idle, sauntering, elder brother.

Harry Egerton, the youngest, was already undergoing the sentence usually pronounced upon sprightly refractory boys. Too turbulent for the narrow limits of Hurley House, he had been sent to Gosport, and disposed of in the navy ; and the rebellious school-boy was now a smart promising midshipman, of whom his parents saw little more than his captain's half-yearly receipts, and his own letters from various quarters of the globe, differing curiously in shape and orthography, and occasionally smelling of quarantine.

For several years succeeding the unlucky visit which served to introduce the little Egertons to their noble grandfather and his pheasants, an invitation to the Castle had been annually despatched to their father—the Hon. William, by himself, William—without further allusion to his wife or offspring, which was regularly and conscientiously declined, and resolved never again to set foot in his father's house till Mrs. Egerton and little Mary were included in the invitation. In this decision, however, Helstone Rectory pronounced him to be wrong. Helstone Rectory assured him that his first object in life ought to be the advancement of his sons ; and that it was his duty to honour and obey the Earl his father, even if the Earl his father did not choose to honour and invite his wife.

Egerton thought otherwise. Albeit of any thing but a resisting turn of mind, he adhered to his original determination. It was only when, just as John attained his eighteenth and Julius his seventeenth year, and their parents were sorely puzzled in what way to provide for their future fortunes, an invitation arrived for the two elder boys to pass the winter at Tiverton Castle, that the entreaties of the young Wintonian, and the remonstrances of Miss Rachel Spry, induced their good-natured father to withdraw his opposition so far as regarded the young men. Though Lord and Lady Tiverton persisted in their ungraciousness to poor Olivia, it was a step towards improvement that they deigned to acknowledge the claims of their grandsons.

Mr. Egerton decided in his own mind, as he mused over the affair on the eve of his sons' departure for the Castle, that his father and mother, who were now advancing in life, were growing more conscientious, more serious in their views, and felt reluctant that their latter days should be uncheered by the society of their children's children. The occasional answers to the letters of ceremony addressed to his wife by the Countess, tended to prove that ladyship had never overcome her disgust at being obliged to

sign herself "affectionate mother-in-law" to the daughter of her former governess; but it was to be hoped that the voice of nature was at length stirring up her affections towards her grandchildren.

So ill-founded, however, were the good man's Christianity conjectures, that the invitation despatched to the young Egertons originated solely in a pique against Lady Egerton and her family. The old Countess having taken offence against the wife and children of her eldest son, chose to raise up in opposition the children of her second; and it was an unexpected consolation that the good looks and manners of John, and the superior endowments of Julius, enabled her to set them up as dangerous rivals to Claude and Dick Egerton, in the favour of their almost doting grandfather.

Unconscious of her object, the Hurley lads fell readily into the snare. With the freedom of a public schoolboy, John was soon at home at the Castle; and though the more silent habits of Julius rendered the life he was now leading a life of penance, he found ample compensation in his solitary rambles through the fine park and forest scenery of the neighbourhood. His letters to his sister Mary abounded in descriptions of the beauties of Tiverton, and of the favour enjoyed by their brother. Preserves, keepers, kennels, stables, all were at John's disposal, and the old doctor and Miss Rachel were almost justified in suggesting to Egerton and his wife that Jack's fortune was evidently made.

Advice was immediately poured in upon the young gentleman, both from Helstone Parsonage and Hurley House. His grandfather and aunt wrote to entreat him, in homely phrase, to make hay while the sun shone; his mother, to beg he would remember his younger brothers; his father, to beg that he would not forget himself. But while they were still awaiting answers to their letters, in anxious hope of confirmation of Julius's reports, the London coach stopped one morning at the gate of Hurley House, to deposit the portmanteaus and persons of the two crestfallen young men.

In spite of the hesitation of Julius, and the ill-timed laughter of John, in attempting an explanation of their abrupt reappearance, it was clear they were come back in disgrace. It was admitted by both, that nothing could exceed the partiality of which they had been at first the object. The old Countess had seemed to take delight in devoting her purse and her authority at the Castle to the gratification of their whims; till one unlucky day, tidings having reached Lord Tiverton of the demise of the rector of Wyndham, her ladyship so far extended her patronage as to signify to her elder grandson that she *intended him* for the church; that Wyndham and its fourteen hundred pounds a-year were eventually to be his; and that Lord Tiverton would undertake the cost of sending him to college.

"I had much rather he would undertake the cost of sending me into the army," was John Egerton's rash reply. "My mind is not

upon being a soldier ; and, as to going into the church, I would as soon be a packhorse as a parson."

Struck dumb by this presumptuous opposition on the part of an indigent grandson, the Countess set no bounds to her resentment. In threatening him with the finest of the family livings, she fancied she was providing not only nobly but in the manner most acceptable, for a descendant in whose veins her own blood was ignominiously commingled with that of a Dr. Spry. Had she sentenced one of the sons of her son William to become a custom-house officer, she would have exacted implicit obedience ; but that John should imagine himself so far endowed with an eldest son's privilege of rebellion, as to refuse the provision he was thus insolently rejecting, added insult to injury. Lord Egerton's sons could not have done worse. Lord Egerton's sons had, in fact, done nothing half so bad. Without deigning to remonstrate, without deigning even to reprimand, she motioned the ungrateful rebel from her sight ; and on the following day the two young gentlemen found themselves travelling per mail to London, on their return to Hurley House.

Nothing could exceed the consternation produced in the little family circle by this alarming explanation. Mrs. Egerton naturally resented the coarse expression by which John had offended the ears of the Countess, which she was foolish enough to fancy reflected upon her father rather than upon her son. Little Mary was afraid poor John had irretrievably offended his vindictive grandmother ; while John himself feared only that his rash candour might have injured the interests of his brothers and sister. Mr. Egerton alone, consulting his sense of rectitude rather than his temper or his prudence, applauded the resolution formed by his son not to make the house of God the seat of the money-changers, by accepting a family living at the risk of disgracing the church by a reluctant member.

In spite of Dr. Spry's reprehensions, and Miss Rachel's harangues, he persisted in this disinterested view of the case ; even after seeing his eldest son lounge away the ensuing spring and summer at Hurley, resisting all his grandfather's entreaties that he would despatch a letter of submission to the Countess, and proceed to college and study for a degree.

The utmost poor William allowed himself to do in reprehension of the contumacy of his eldest born was to admit, with a sigh, his regret that he had ever sanctioned the visit of the two boys to Tiverton Castle. It was plain that three months of luxurious idleness had confirmed the elder in his desultory habits : while, as to Julius, he was come back more strange, more depressed, more silent, than ever. Though the sunshine of favour had not been vouchsafed to him as to the reckless John, the indulgence of his solitary rambles and reflections had served to develop the instincts of an ambitious mind, and to render painfully distasteful the mediocrity of his appointed destinies.

From his childhood, Julius Egerton had enjoyed the dangerous distinction of being in advance of his family and associates. There was not one among them to whom his young mind could turn for enlightenment. Overpraised and overtaken by his teachers, till his proficiency placed him on bad terms with his schoolfellows, the little fellow became reserved and gloomy; and it was in the consciousness of his mental superiority he naturally took refuge from the ill-usage of his companions. Quizzed by his brother John as a sap, and hoaxed by his brother Harry as a prig, Julius acquired a sort of awkward shyness, which, on his arrival at Tiverton Castle, excited the utmost contempt of the Countess. The uncouth boy was allowed to mope away his time in the woods and gardens; while those who condemned him to this dangerous solitude, took no heed of the struggles working in that over-excited mind.

The master spirit of his ambitious nature was fostering into giant growth by all he was hearing and seeing at Tiverton. His grandfather's fine old feudal establishment—the noble halls and galleries, pictures and sculptures; the majestic chapel, the lofty library, the massive plate, the obsequious menials, inspired him with undue deference towards the patrician estate which philosophy had hitherto instructed him to regard without wonder, and religion without envy. He began to conceive that equanimity of mind might be a difficult virtue. He saw that the possession of worldly treasures rendered even his ugly ungracious old grandmother an object of respect and veneration. His own awe of her was sensibly increased on beholding her escorted to her splendid equipage by a multitude of hirelings in livery, while a well-dressed, well-bred groom of the chambers waited humbly upon her bidding; and it was difficult for a boy of his years not to assign overweening value to distinctions which could beautify all that was unseemly, and dignify all that was unamiable.

The mind of the solitary youth was left to work itself clear between the moral theories inculcated by books, and the practical lessons of the world. Julius Egerton knew that it was a noble thing to rise superior to the adventitious distinctions of life, but he felt himself unequal to the achievement. For such magnanimities there might come a time hereafter; at present he was firmly resolved against remaining the obscure younger son of an obscure younger brother.

With this view, on his return to Hurley House, he set about in such right earnest the completion of his studies, that Aunt Rachel, who took the greatest pride in his proficiency, succeeded, by dint of constant entreaty, in persuading the Egertons to address a pacificatory letter to the old Countess, entreating that the favours intended for the eldest son might be conceded to his brother. But so fierce was the resentment of the vindictive old woman, that return of post brought back an answer to the petition, requesting to be troubled no further with the affairs of Hurley

House, and stating that the living of Wyndham was already given away to the tutor of her promising grandsons, Claude and Dick.

Even Dr. Spry, with all his reliance upon the ascendancy of William Egerton's star, was reduced to despondency by a perusal of this manifesto. He began almost to repent his generosity in having sent John to Winchester, and bestowed upon Julius in his holidays such store of gratuitous scholarship. After all, they were perhaps fated to grovel through life in humble mediocrity, like the sons of any other private gentleman.

Accustomed for fifty of his threescore years and ten to teach the ideas of beardless lordlings and younger sons of dukes how to shoot, and to see them prospered in after-life by aristocratic influence in spite of their inefficiency, Dr. Spry, was scarcely aware that young men may essentially promote their own advancement in life. Instead of speculating upon the extraordinary abilities of Julius, or stimulating the idle John to exertion, he spoke of their ruin as accomplished by the estrangement of Lord and Lady Tiverton.

"I know the Countess," said he. "It would be odd indeed if the experience of my late wife, added to my own, did not afford me some insight into Lady Alicia Pelham's character; and I am persuaded it would give her pleasure to learn that John Egerton and his brothers were atoning to the utmost his undutiful opposition to her will. It is impossible to possess more strength of character than the Countess; it is impossible to be more inflexible—more vindictive. All is over with the boys!—Lady Tiverton has become their enemy, and not a soul in the family will venture to stand their friend."

But while Helstone Rectory seemed to forget that there was a will in the world mightier than that of the Countess, so important in its eyes as the daughter and wife of its two august patrons, the Power in whose sight kings are but dust and ashes, was preparing a fearful reverse for the haughty lady of Tiverton Castle. The Earl, whose feeble tenure of life had so long enabled her to legislate in his name, was suddenly called to his account, and his widow reduced to the nothingness of dowager insignificance. Within a week after issuing her thundering anathema against Hurley House, her kingdom was taken from her and given to the Medes and Persians. Condemned to abdicate her throne, she maintained her dignity by a precipitate departure to her dower-house in town; and, lo! Lady Egerton, as the new Countess of Tiverton, reigned in her stead.

The new Earl and Countess of Tiverton were perhaps a degree less unamiable than their predecessors; but their tempers were not improved by having been for twenty years the sport of parental caprice. Sometimes in favour, sometimes out, and at all times kept in a state of anxious dependence, it was not likely they could be deeply afflicted by the decease of the valetudinarian

Earl, or affectionately disposed towards those surviving members of the family who had been every now and then erected into rivalry by the whims of Tiverton Castle.

As a matter of decorum, however, William Egerton was invited to bear his part as mourner at the funeral of the deceased Earl; and, as a matter of feeling, he accepted the invitation. His estrangement from his father's house having at times weighed heavily on his mind, he was anxious to pay the last tribute of respect to the memory of one against whom he reproached himself with having sometimes entertained unfilial resentments. He arrived at the Castle on the eve of the day fixed for the interment, thinking more of the father he was come to bury than of the brother or brothers he was to meet; and on emerging from the hall where the remains of the imbecile old man of seventy-four were lying in state, surrounded by solemn mutes and gaudy escutcheons, he was too much affected to take note of the unexpected graciousness of Lord Tiverton's greeting, or his explanations that their brother Adolphus, being laid up in London with the gout, was unable to share their melancholy duties.

Of the said brother Adolphus, indeed, William Egerton knew and thought about as little as of the mutes whose crape hat-bands had just been whisked into his eyes. From the period of his marriage all intercourse between them had ceased. Adolphus Egerton, the condisciple of his brother at Helstone Rectory, having early imbibed the utmost detestation of every thing appertaining to the name of Spry, had from the first frankly assured poor William that the day which saw him the spouse of the fair Olivia, would be the last of their fraternal friendship, and had kept his word. Not that on either that or any other point he affected to spare the prejudices of his father and mother. His dislike of the Sprys was purely personal, and would have been the same had the Doctor been, instead of his pedagogue, lord chamberlain or master of the rolls.

On the other hand, the enmity of Adolphus Egerton was of small account, except to the tender conscience of his brother. They never came in contact, seldom even heard of each other. Their orbits were unaccordant: Adolphus being as completely a London man as William a country gentleman. Nor was the latter surprised to find that not even so momentous an event as that of consigning a parent to the earth, sufficed to unmoor his brother from his anchorage in the parish of St. James.

"I am here quite alone," was Lord Tiverton's salutation to William. "At this season of the year, I would not hear of Lady Tiverton and my daughters hurrying down to the Castle at so unpleasant a moment."

When, after a silent, solitary dinner, the two brothers found themselves tête-à-tête over their wine, there was something startling in the crisis which, after twenty years' alienation, brought

together thus familiarly, within a short distance from the coffin containing the remains of their common parent—the twain who, forty years before, had sported hand-in-hand in that very room, unapprehensive of the worldly sentiments which were in after life to render them strangers to each other. Unconsciously, William Egerton fixed his eyes upon his brother's face, striving to trace in the harsh lineaments of the man the fair features of the boy ; and if Lord Tiverton refrained from a similar investigation, it was because his mind, in no mood for tender reminiscence, was engrossed by the confusion of summing up the amount of his newly acquired honours, estates, mortgages, and the post-obits against which they were to be balanced.

They had met at rare intervals in the hurry of a London crowd, and while Lord Egerton was shaking hands with his obscure brother, he had of course noted that poor William was growing stout and his hair grey. But there was nothing more to be thought or said about the matter ; and could the new Earl have imagined what was passing in his brother's mind, as they sat opposite to each other at table, he would have called him a weak, nervous, foolish fellow, and pressed him to take another glass of wine ; just as Miss Rachel Spry would have shrugged her shoulders with wonder that at such a moment he should be thinking of any thing but a provision for his sons.

"I fear I shall be obliged to hurry back to town to-morrow the moment this melancholy business is over," observed Lord Tiverton, breaking their embarrassing silence. "I have so much on my hands that I scarcely know which way to turn. My father has left every thing upon my shoulders ! I find I am sole executor, residuary legatee, saddled with all imaginable plagues and troubles. Not, however, that the will leaves me much to do. The portions of the younger children under my mother's marriage settlement were paid off, as you are aware, on their severally coming of age ; and, being all happily settled in life, my poor father has not thought it necessary to do more for them by his testamentary dispositions. There are pensions to the old servants, and legacies for rings to old Doubledose, and Latitat and his partner. My mother has her jointure, and twenty thousand pounds in lieu of personality. These are the heads of the will ; but if you feel any curiosity about the matter, it may be seen by applying to Latitat, in London. Smith, of Penrith, took it off to town last night by the mail, preparatory to probate."

"Thank you. As my name is not mentioned, I have no particular interest in the perusal," replied William, in a mortified tone. "I did sometimes hope my father might do something for the boys."

"In the manner his estates were tied up, I don't see how it was possible. And, if I recollect, he always assured you that, in the event of your fulfilling your engagement to old Spry's daughter, he would never give you a shilling !"

"The lapse of twenty years might have subdued his animosity," replied William, gravely. "God knows, we never molested him. Olivia has turned out an exemplary wife, my sons are fine young men. To be sure, John was so unfortunate as to offend his grandmother."

"So I understood. Just as my boy Dick managed to affront her by preferring a cruise in the Mediterranean to escorting her to Buxton. As if any thing else was to be expected of a spirited young fellow of his age! By the way," continued Lord Tiverton, warming and assuming a confidential tone the moment the conversation was directed to objects interesting only to himself,—*"it is amazingly unlucky for us all that Dick Egerton is not a couple of years older. My poor mother always spoke so confidently on the subject, that we felt persuaded my father would hold out for several years to come; so that, as there seemed no probability of my seat falling vacant, I allowed Egerton to leave England for the grand tour only six weeks ago. In our time, you know, the grand tour meant Paris, Rome, Naples, and perhaps Vienna; now it appears to include Russia, Tartary, Persia, Asia Minor, Egypt, and the Lord knows what! Poor Egerton cannot have got further than St. Petersburg; and it would be a sad waste of time and money to recall him from such a distance, merely to be elected and take his seat till the close of the session, with a general election coming on."*

"Certainly, it seems scarcely worth while," faltered William Egerton, in whose bosom the long-forgotten voice of his brother was waking up a thousand tender recollections, which somewhat disturbed his presence of mind.

"Whereas, if Dick were a couple of years older," resumed the Earl, "I could put *him* in, and trouble myself no further. It is not easy to find a person altogether suitable as a stop-gap for so short a time. I swear I have half a mind to leave it in the hands of government. They have always some useful man lying by for such emergencies, and every thing would be on the safe side, besides making a favourable impression where one is never sorry to stand on good terms."

"My poor father invariably supported the present government," mused William, whose thoughts were neither with his brother nor his nephews.

"Ay, and in the most disinterested manner. I don't recollect that he ever asked the smallest favour in his life!—To be sure, there was no great occasion. His family wanted nothing; and I shall therefore be able to apply to government with a better grace for the marquise I have so much at heart, and which I trust to obtain at the next creation. Yes!—all things considered, I shall certainly leave the borough in the hands of ministers for the present; but still I should have been better pleased to put in Dick Egerton, had he been of an age to come forward."

"How old is your second son?" inquired William, trying to feel interested in the affairs of one who to *his* was so totally indifferent.

"Scarcely nineteen,—about eighteen and a half."

"True, I remember;—a few months younger than my eldest. John is——"

"I must say for Dick," again interrupted Lord Tiverton, "that if any young fellow of his years *could* be qualified for a seat in parliament, it is himself. Dick Egerton is better known about town than many a man of thirty. Before he left Eton, his face was familiar at Almack's and his name at Crockford's. He is an amazingly fine young man; a *leettle* wild perhaps, like almost every great genius; but the world will tame him down—the world will tame him down!—*Your* boys, I suppose, are entered at the University?"

"At present," replied William, "I am sorry to say, that though my youngest boy has been——"

"Egerton was on the books before he was sixteen!" interrupted Lord Tiverton, still harping on his sons; "at twenty he took his degree, and one, I assure you, that did him honour; and now, I may venture to say that there is not a finer or more accomplished young man of his age in the three kingdoms. Do your sons bear any resemblance to the family, or are they more like the Sprys?"

"John is considered extraordinarily like myself; and, if you remember, I was always considered the image of"——

"It must be some years, I fancy, since you saw Egerton and his brother?"—again remorselessly interrupted Lord Tiverton. "I think I may say, without partiality, that they will surprise you.—Dick is somewhat more than six feet already; and I have very little doubt that he has a year's growth in him yet!—I own I was always anxious that my sons should turn out tall; and if Dick persists in his plan of going into the Blues, his figure will be a very serious advantage to him. I have promised that the first thing I do on my return to town shall be to get his name put down for a cornetcy."

The kindly nature of William Egerton inspired him with patience to listen to his brother's wordy vauntings, hoping that his turn would come to be heard in praise of his own promising sons. But no—after Lord Tiverton had exhausted his eloquence in laudation of the merits of his sons and beauties of his daughters, till his auditor might have been qualified to paint strong likenesses of the Ladies Ismena and Henrietta Egerton, and to pen a certificate of the talents of their brothers, he proposed coffee, and after coffee, bed; his lordship assuring poor William that, after so long a journey and with the trying scene of the morrow in prospect, he must want repose.

He was accordingly compelled to retire without having been able to edge in a word of the charms of his pretty unassuming

little Mary, or of his spirited boys; and as Lord Tiverton had announced his intention of quitting the Castle immediately after the solemn ceremonial, there seemed every probability that William Egerton would return to Hurley a poorer man by the cost of his journey, and neither the happier nor the more sanguine in behalf of his children, from any expectations of patronage held out by the new Earl.

On the following day, however, about five minutes before his lordship stepped into his travelling carriage, as they stood together beside the well-covered luncheon-table to which they had repaired on returning home from the grand celebration in Tiverton Church, the Earl (after expressing some regret that, on account of being accompanied by his man of business, he could not offer his brother a seat in his *dormeuse*, and a hope that he would remain at the Castle as long as it was agreeable to him) drew him off to the embrasure of a window to avoid being overheard by the butler, who was fussing inquisitively round the table, and abruptly inquired, "*Whether there was any thing he could do for him?*"

The phrase is one of common parlance, more especially between ministers and members, and members and their constituents, to signify a vague intention of conferring obligation at the least possible cost and trouble to the inquirer. Had the Earl really intended fraternal service towards the brother, who inherited nothing by virtue of the will which assigned *him* thirty thousand pounds a year, he would of course have expressed himself otherwise; or rather, without expressing himself at all, would have placed a bank-note of considerable amount in his hands. But his utmost meaning was, (as a man of the world, such, for instance, as his own brother Adolphus, would have instantly understood,) "Have I succeeded to any thing, in addition to my title and estates, which, being of no possible use to me or mine, could be turned to account by you or yours?"

William Egerton, however, instead of being a man of the world, was only one of the best creatures in it; and, so far from apprehending the hollowness of his brother's kindness, he pressed Lord Tiverton's hand with grateful emotion, and was for some minutes unable to reply. At length, on a reiteration of the question, he stammered forth a request for permission to consult Mrs. Egerton, and write his answer from Hurley House; and the Earl, though somewhat alarmed by all this note of preparation, more especially as Mrs. Egerton had been described to him by his mother as a low-minded, encroaching woman, had no other means of cutting short the conversation and hastening into his carriage than by a shake of the hand, and an apparently cordial assurance of assent.

Overpowered by this unexpected concession on the part of Lord Tiverton, and full of reliance upon the sincerity of his intentions, William remained, according to his lordship's advice, a day or two longer at the Castle, to refresh himself after his journey, and re-

new long-forgotten associations. During his ill-starred visit to Tiverton with his young family twelve years before, he had lived in such terror of some unintentional offence being committed by his wife or one of his children, as never to be sufficiently at ease for the contemplation of a spot which had been a beloved home to him until his memorable removal to "*propria quæ maribus*, and Helstone Parsonage."

The consequential servants, meanwhile, who, though accustomed to the present Lord Tiverton's frequent visits to the Castle, and Adolphus's septennial apparition previous to occasional applications to the Earl to pay off his Newmarket embarrassments, had never seen William Egerton numbered among their guests, could scarcely bring themselves to believe that the middle-aged man, who went wandering with tears in his eyes from room to room, looking at the family pictures, and shaking his head at all the recent improvements, was also a son of their late master. Owing to the gradual changes of the household, the Honourable William, who had married disgracefully, and been banished accordingly, had come to be a traditional personage in the steward's room ; and, but that he had officiated as pall-bearer at the funeral, and been shaken hands with by the new Earl, the butler would probably have felt inclined to double-lock his plate-room.

At length, the housekeeper suggested that the melancholy individual who made himself so much at home, must certainly be father to the two young gentlemen who had been packed off some weeks before from the Castle in disgrace and all the ignominy of poor relationship, and who, though they gave so much trouble to the under-footmen, had given them nothing else ; and, but that Lord Tiverton had expressly commanded every attention to be paid to Mr. Egerton after his departure, the domestics would soon have made it apparent that he was very much in the way. Between the exit of the Dowager and the entrance of the new Countess they had their little perquisites to realize and arrangements to make, and how was it possible to do any thing comfortable or satisfactory with a strange gentleman in the house ?—No doubt he would go spunging on for ages to come at the Castle, plaguing their lives out.

The lapse of a day or two, however, put an end to their uneasiness. Amid the purple and fine linen of Tiverton Castle, William Egerton's heart yearned after his humble fireside, surrounded by happy, loving faces. He stayed only long enough to re-peruse every feature of a scene from which he had been so long absent, and which he felt persuaded he should never visit again. He chose to descend into the family vault ere it was bricked up ; and saw the sexton's flaring rushlight drip unnoticed upon the crimson velvet coffin deposited there with so much pomp and deference the preceding day. He chose to shake hands with his paralytic old nurse, now an inmate of the Tiverton workhouses. He chose to saunter beside the stream into which he

had thrown his first trout line—the fence he had first ventured to take—the farmhouse whose buxom dame had in her girlhood all but smiled him into inconstancy to Olivia Spry. Then, after musing one solitary evening beside the vast fireplace of the noble chamber, into which Hurley House might have been thrust for fuel, out-buildings and all, was glad to cough down the choking in his throat ere he rang to order the postchaise that was to enable him to meet the mail, on his return to a home embellished by the endearments of sympathizing hearts ;—to his darling little Mary, his loving sons, and their still tenderly beloved mother.

To say that those by whom William Egerton was anxiously expected at Hurley entertained no curiosity to learn the worldly results of his journey to the north, would be to attribute to Mrs. Egerton and her offspring too rare a superiority over the frailties of human nature ; more especially as Miss Rachel Spry, with her keen, grey, prying eyes, was just then added to the family group.

But the young people entertained too high a respect for their father not to feel that, on his return from the funeral of his own, his thoughts must be otherwise engrossed than by the pelf of this world. No one, not even Miss Rachel, took the liberty of inquiring of poor William, whether his black coat brought with it its own consolation in the shape of a handsome bequest. But when, at length, a few words explained that the decease of the Earl had effected no change in his pecuniary affairs, except so far as to subtract from his purse the amount of his travelling expenses to and from Tiverton Castle, a few more speedily followed, to comfort his wife with an assurance that the boys had every thing to expect from their uncle.

Unluckily, the task of expectation is as easy as it is agreeable. Furthered by aunt Rachel's widely spreading ambitions, the two young men immediately allowed their imaginations to run riot. It was voted, *nem con.*, that the Earl should provide for Julius in the church, and get John provided for in the army, besides forwarding the interests of little Harry with the lords of the Admiralty ; and, though a few hundreds per annum would have been an agreeable addition to the Egertons' income, they admitted, ere they retired to rest that night, that they were quite satisfied matters should stand as they did, since the future interests of the family were secured by the good intentions of Lord Tiverton.

On the following day, accordingly, a letter was despatched to his lordship's address in town, signifying William's desire that he would lose no time in procuring a commission for his eldest, and in promising a living to his second son ; and, remembering the promptitude of the unfavourable reply vouchsafed some months before by the Countess-Dowager, the sanguine family did not doubt that, in a day or two at furthest, good news would reach them from the Earl.

Day followed day, however, and week followed week ; but no

envelope bearing the name of "Tiverton" disclosed its dignities among the shabby-looking letters of the Hurley post-office. Miss Rachel, satisfied that there must be some mistake, actually trotted into the village to cross-examine the mistress of the little grocer's shop to which the office was annexed ; but Mrs. Brown was firm in her assertion, that she was "sartain sure all the letters had been punctooally delivered, and that there hadn't been no government kiver whatsumever for the Honourable William Egerton."

Miss Rachel was indignant ; more especially as she was about to return to Helstone without being able to surprise the old Doctor with tidings of the elevation of his grandsons. Even Mr. Egerton was beginning to fear that Richard, the sixth Earl of Tiverton, would prove as lukewarm a friend as Richard, the fifth. It was only little Mary Egerton who went on hoping. The joy and blessing of Hurley House and Hurley village, she had a happy knack of cherishing hope for herself and imparting it to others ; and, cheered by *her* prognostications of ultimate success, the father and mother took patience, and continued to indulge in chimeras that John might yet be a field-marshal, and Julius archbishop of Canterbury.

Spring and summer passed away, however, without the smallest token of notice from the Earl. The parents grew impatient—the two young men, angry ; till, at length, the urgent necessity for taking further steps in their education induced William Egerton to overcome his repugnance, and he wrote again mildly, but firmly, to his brother.

"I am *extremely* sorry to perceive, my dear William," was his lordship's unmeaningly emphatic reply, "that you have so little reliance upon my *word* as to conceive me unmindful of your *interests*. The press of business thrown upon my hands by the recent melancholy event in our family, has rendered it IMPOSSIBLE for me to reply *earlier* to your letter of 3rd of February last, signifying your wish to *have one of your sons provided for* BY GOVERNMENT *in the army, and another, UPON THE EGERTON INTEREST, in the church.*

"Allow me, my dear brother, *by way of preliminary*, to take the liberty of remarking, that I look upon it as *rather hard*, considering you are aware that, of MY two sons, one is destined to be a *soldier*, you should expect me to WEAKEN my interest at the Horse Guards in favour of any other person ; and in the next place, permit me to observe, that I am *fully aware* of your having REFUSED the living of Wyndham for one of your sons *previous* to its being bestowed upon my son Dick's tutor, young Nicewig ; *which inconsistency of purpose not being generally known*, it will make a *very singular impression* on the PUBLIC, that Lord Tiverton's chaplain should be *enjoying family preferment to the amount of FOURTEEN HUNDRED -YEAR, while his nephew is presented to a living of TWO!* I confess, *refore*, I should have been better pleased had you chosen for

your son any other profession than the church. Concluding, however, that you had *urgent motives* for making these requests at a period when you are aware I have need of ALL my interest with GOVERNMENT for the furtherance of my ANXIOUS wishes concerning the marquisate, *I made up my mind to overlook the annoyance of having to harass ministers with so untimely an application*; and have now the pleasure to tell you, that Mr. John Egerton's name *is inserted in the Horse-Guards' list for an ensigncy*, the first available opportunity; and the satisfaction of adding, that the list which last year contained three thousand one hundred names, is reduced to two thousand nine hundred AND SEVENTY-TWO!

"With regard to a *living* for your second son, I regret to say that, previous to my succeeding to the disposal of the family preferment, *promises* had been EXACTED from me in favour of the two Flinthams, Lady Tiverton's younger brothers. I FEAR, therefore, it will be MANY YEARS before I have any thing in my gift *worthy the acceptance of Mr. Julius Egerton*. However, if you choose him to take orders, I PLEDGE myself to do what I CAN for him; having no object nearer at heart than to promote the welfare and respectability of the Egerton family.

With compliments to your family, I am, my dear brother, truly yours,

"TIVERTON."

"St. James's Square,
"June 10th, 183—."

Grievous was the damp thrown by this formal epistle upon the spirits of the little circle. A hectic spot burnt upon the cheek of Julius as he listened to what appeared his sentence of condemnation; and even John shrugged his shoulders, while Mrs. Egerton expressed her conviction that Lord Tiverton's original intentions had been frustrated by the influence of his worldly wife in favour of her own relations. But not even this acceptable apology could reconcile William Egerton to so cruel a change of tone on the part of his brother. For himself, he had borne neglect and humiliation without a murmur; for his boys, he was less disposed to patience; and so marked was the irritation with which the usually placid man crumpled up Lord Tiverton's letter and thrust it into his pocket, that on his quitting the room, and being seen a few moments afterwards hurriedly traversing the paddock, his daughter, after a significant nod from her mother, tied on her bonnet, and hastened to cheer him with that dutiful companionship which was the dearest solace of his life.

But if Hurley House were overwhelmed with disappointment, what was the indignation of Helstone rectory, when poor William drove over in his gig the following day to communicate his griefs?

"His lordship's patronage already pledged?" cried aunt Rachel.
"Lord Holwell, with ten thousand a-year, bespeak benefices for

his sons ? I don't believe a word of it ! I can't believe a word of it ! It is nothing but a pitiful get-off, at Lady Tiverton's suggestion. That woman has always been your enemy. Half the animosity entertained against my poor sister, at the Castle was of Lady Egerton's conjuring up ; for, from what I have heard my poor, dear mother say of the Countess, and my poor, dear father say of the Earl, I am convinced it was not *in* them to be so unnaturally cruel as they shewed themselves to the poor, dear boys, had not some mischievous person been at hand to aggravate their ill-will."

"But, if you remember, my sister-in-law was not just then on terms at the Castle," pleaded Egerton.

"No matter :—one way or other, depend upon it, she had something to do with it ; and just as she always kept you in hot water with your father, she will with your brother, unless you take the initiative. My dear, dear Mr. Egerton, you must lose no time in driving her from the field by a *coup de main* !"

William Egerton looked puzzled.

"Prove to Lord and Lady Tiverton that you are in no want of their patronage—that your sons are otherwise provided for—and, my life upon it, they become your zealous friends !"

"But my sons are *not* otherwise provided for," remonstrated her matter-of-fact brother-in-law ; "and, so far from being in a situation to dispense with my brother's patronage, I told him frankly, when we were down together at Tiverton Castle, that I had no chance of getting any thing done for my boys unless through his recommendation."

"Then no wonder he treats you so shamefully !—what else had you to expect ?—However, since *that* foolish step is irretrievable you must turn your plans in another direction. You seem to have forgotten all this while the splendid patronage possessed by your uncle, the Duke of Pelham ?"

"Since my marriage, he has never taken the slightest notice of me," faltered William, in a low voice.

"So long as you had a hope of getting any thing done by Lord Tiverton there was no use in reminding you of it," continued Miss Rachel, without noticing his interruption. "But now, the time is come for you to avail yourself of your family connections. Take my advice, William. Write and ask his grace, point blank, for the reversion of Helstone. Remind him that Dr. Spry is infirm—that he has done much for the improvement of the living—that your son will officiate as his curate so long as he lives, and naturally succeed to his gown when he is no more ;—and be sure to put forward the claims of Julius, not as the nephew of Lord Tiverton, but as the grandson of his grace's venerable tutor and the tender preceptress of his grace's amiable sisters. The Duke had a great regard for my poor, dear mother—(when he was a boy, he once
le his way slyly into the school-room, and tied a squib to her

lawn apron)—he assured he will not have the face to refuse the reversion of Helstone to poor Julius."

Awed by the prospect of making so bold an attempt, William Egerton shook his head, hemming, hawing, and doubting as to the discretion of the measure. But his sister-in-law would hear of no delay. Having drilled him down to a desk, with pens, ink, paper, and wax on one side, and the rough copy of a plausibly indited letter on the other, there was no retreat either for his timidity or his idleness. The application was penned and despatched; and so speedily acknowledged with a favourable answer by the Duke of Pelham, (who was in an agony lest the world should discover he had a nephew in need of so small a favour,) that Rachel Spry had some right to pride herself for the remainder of her days upon the success of her tactics.

For her triumph did not end with the promise of the living of Helstone. Lord Tiverton, after casually learning one night from his uncle the Duke, between the deals of a rubber at Brookes's, that he was in correspondence with his brother William concerning a provision for one of his sons, saw fit to exert himself so manfully at the Horse-Guards, with a view to the redemption of his character for fraternal affection, that "John Egerton, gent.," was gazetted into a crack regiment of the line about the same time that "Julius Egerton, clerk," was entered at Trin. Coll., Cam.

A cubit was added to Miss Rachel's stature by this triple fruition of her plans. She had secured an assistant for her father, a living for one nephew, and a commission for another; and, though Hurley House grew very dull to poor Egerton after the departure of his boys, he was comforted by the knowledge that they were now "as good as provided for."

All that remained to him of paternal anxiety was the dread that, on the completion of little Mary's education, some audacious young fellow, with assurance and white teeth, might win her affections, carry her off as his bride, and perfect the desolation of Hurley.

CHAPTER II.

UNCLE ADOLPHUS.

It is often pronounced the most enviable situation in the world when a spirited young man of twenty-one comes into the enjoyment of an ancient title and unencumbered estate. But, under favour of those who maintain such an opinion, that man is thrice as much to be envied who, after five-and-twenty years of difficulties, arrives at the same crisis; to luxuriate in the satisfaction of smoothing down domestic discontents, paying off long-stand-

debts and long-grumbling domestics, and heaping upon a peevish wife and eager children the often-promised repayment of their privations.

All this and more now fell to the share of the Earl of Tiverton. Though the buoyancy of youth was gone with its elastic and reckless sense of enjoyment, he had acquired a middle-age-like delight in the mere consciousness of possession ; the aspect of his banker's book being now as great a source of excitement to him as the sight of a fine Salvator or Vandyck twenty years before ; and the recital of a rent-roll sweeter music in his ears than all the oratorios of Handel or symphonies of Haydn.

But, setting aside the selfish enjoyment of his newly-acquired fortunes, there was sufficient delight in knowing that the murmurs of his wife were at an end ; that he should have no more complaints of the ignominy of occupying a box on the third tier at the opera ; of appearing at the drawing-room in a carriage five seasons old, and a diamond necklace that would disgrace the lady of a country baronet ; of being able to afford only a governess a-piece to his daughters, and a hack a-piece to his sons ; of being, in short, overwhelmed with the miseries arising from a limited income and illimitable desires.

No wonder that his lordship found no leisure to answer the letters of necessitous brothers, when such a burthen of laborious happiness was laid upon his shoulders. In the first place, the house in St. James's Square was to be thoroughly repaired, beautified, and furnished, with all the costly items of modern luxury. Lady Tiverton, who, with a boundless taste for expense, had been compelled ever since her marriage to tame down her genius, and renounce the pursuit of pleasures, to which, as Lord Holwell's daughter, she felt herself entitled, and to which, on her marriage with Lord Egerton, she had secretly trusted to be speedily promoted by the death of their valetudinarian father, soon set to work the invention of the London vanity-mongers ; and every day, almost every hour, his lordship found his sanction required for some addition to his service of plate, or family jewels, or equipages, or stud. So long debarred the vulgar pleasure of acquisition, Lady Tiverton seemed to fancy she could not buy enough while any thing new or fashionable remained to be purchased.

It was, perhaps, fortunate for the Earl that his daughters were not yet of an age to stimulate their mother's extravagance. Lady Ismena, the eldest, was still in the school-room ; Lady Henrietta, several years younger, still in the nursery ; and Lady Tiverton had, consequently, the enjoyment of her first two or three years of splendour unencumbered with the chaperonage of a daughter.

Those years, however, were not thrown away. While little Mary Egerton was sewing seams by her mother's side, or accompanying her upon errands of village benevolence ; while John was displaying his epaulet in country quarters ; and Julius fagging his

way to distinction at Trinity, the beautiful Lady Ismena was placed under the persecution of all the fashionable professors just then perplexing the intellects of the rising generation. She was no longer allowed to think, look, speak, or move, in a natural manner. All was art, all grimace; and the morning papers were instructed to ring out their note of preparation in announcement of her debut.

The fashionable world applauded; for it was understood that Lady Tiverton intended to signalize her daughter's presentation by a series of balls. Lady Ismena's beautiful face lent its smiles to the Book of Beauty for the season, illustrated by an ode from a lady laureate, who, never having seen the original of the picture, was misled by the transparency of the engraving into describing her ladyship's hazel eyes as

Blue with the tint of Heaven's cerulean vault;

whereupon, all the would-be fashionables indulged in raptures concerning the brightness of her ladyship's matchless blue eyes.

People who saw matters more prosaically, were not only cognizant of the colour of her eyes, but strongly of opinion that the efforts of Lady Tiverton's two years of opulence had done wonders to spoil one of the fairest productions of nature; and more than one spiteful dowager, to whom the worldly-minded Countess allowed a private glimpse of the new beauty, was anxiously circulating her charitable hope that poor little Lady Henrietta would not be tortured into the airs and grimaces disfiguring her eldest sister.

Considering the fatal zeal with which Lady Tiverton pursued her task of perversion, this did not appear probable. The Countess, who was really proud of her daughters, and as desirous to promote their interests, according to *her* vain and frivolous views, as Mrs. William Egerton to secure the happiness of her unpretending Mary, would have been miserable had a single spot of their natures and capacities been left uncultivated, to throw up flowers and fruits in untrimly wildness. Her object being to render them, like herself, rich countesses—with houses in St. James's Square, fine diamonds, fine equipages, and good boxes at the opera—she was, perhaps, judicious in subduing their intellects to the standard of so contracted a sphere.

Her sons, meanwhile, were already what is called in the world:—Lord Egerton, on his return from his travels, having taken his seat in the house, and made manifest the probability that he would never fill a wider space than the one assigned him by his birthright;—while the Hon. Richard Egerton Egerton, as he was ceremoniously styled by the newspapers, or “Dicky Edge,” as he was familiarly called by the clubs, already excited the highest expectations. Others besides his parents were of opinion that he was likely to make a considerable figure in “the world;” b

others besides his parents were still in doubt whether in the fashionable, the literary, or the political.

Dick Egerton stood in the false position so often assigned in England to the younger brothers of a noble house. In the case of the last Lord Tiverton, a fortune of fifty thousand pounds, settled by the whim of the old Duke of Pelham upon the younger children of his favourite daughter, had provided for William and Adolphus Egerton and their sister, the Marchioness of Easthampton, without injury to the family estate; but the present Countess was not only one of the five dowerless Hon. Misses Flintham, but had so embarrassed her husband's income during his father's lifetime, that the Earl had no present means of increasing the five thousand pounds a-piece, which the tenure of his entailed estates enabled him to raise for the settlement in life of each of his younger children.

Dick Egerton, accordingly, though luxuriously reared and participating in the enjoyments of a princely income, was liable to be reduced at any moment for a maintenance, to less than the present annual amount of his tailor's bill. It is true that the demise of his father, which was to bring him to poverty, would place the family borough at his brother's disposal, so as at least to secure him from his creditors. But Lord Egerton was a young gentleman so wrapt up in self-conceit that it was impossible to penetrate his real disposition; and, after the example of others equally high in station, he was quite as likely to make a government bargain of his seat as sacrifice his interest to screen the disgraces of his family.

Young Egerton was not at present of an age to reflect gravely upon the insecurity of his social position. But he saw that he had his fortune to make; that his brother was to inherit thirty thousand a-year, he only the taste for spending it; and, instead of extracting enjoyment from the talents he was conscious of possessing, his only idea was to turn them to account, as a mountebank. He had brought from Eton and Oxford the reputation of being a clever, agreeable fellow; and though convinced within himself that he possessed capacities of a higher order, was resolved, instead of relinquishing the enjoyments of a man of pleasure, to render them subsidiary to his advancement in life.

Such, stripping away the delusions of pomp and vanity, was the position of Lord Tiverton's family, half-a-dozen years after his attainment of a rank in life which had sufficed to distract his mind with frivolous imaginings while officiating at the funeral of his father. The world saw it in a more favourable light. The world described Tiverton House as a place where the best dinners were eaten, and the best company assembled. The Countess was a delightful person—though a little *passée*, still high bred and fascinating; Lord Egerton, a very gentlemanly man; Dick, the most charming fellow in the world; and their father, all that is necessary the head of such a house—namely, a person never in the way.

Every thing about them conduced to the general attraction. Every thing was elegant and highly-finished ; no "jarring atom" disturbed the harmony of the establishment.

There was one member of the Egerton family who contemplated all this with even deeper interest than the public, to whose enjoyment it was intended to administer. Adolphus, the brother of the Earl, a man to whom *his* prefix of honourable signified as little as the colour of his helper's jacket, had for the last five-and-twenty years been regretting that the Egerton family was beginning to lose caste, in consequence of the old-fashioned habits of the late Earl, the state of whose health did not admit of his passing more than two months of the year in town, or figuring in society. As regarded the world of which Adolphus Egerton formed a fraction, the old lord might as well have been an Egyptian mummy! Instead of keeping up a proper establishment, where his sons might drop in any day throughout the season with a friend to a late dinner, without fear of being poisoned, Lord Tiverton chose to adhere to his English cook and habit of dining at six o'clock ;—the utmost stretch of his hospitality consisting in occasional banquets of the most solemn nature, of which the guests were as cold and heavy as the viands.

Adolphus Egerton had, in fact, been all but obliged to drop the acquaintance of his father and mother !—An egotist to the utmost extent of modern selfishness, Adolphus had proceeded to college after William's unfortunate renunciation of a classical education and professional career ; *not* with the intention of realizing the projects disclosed by his father to Dr. Spry, but because his mother had apprised him that the evil consequences of the private education bestowed upon him by the Earl, were only to be obviated by forming at Oxford the aristocratic connections he had been prevented from acquiring at Helstone parsonage. Aware that the thousand a year, which had enabled his brother to make a foolish marriage, would entitle him to embark in the inviting career of a man about town, he accordingly hastened to complete his education at Christ Church ; quitting the university just in time to avoid expulsion, with the renown of being the best judge of a horse, and the best whist-player of his years, ever launched from the bosom of *alma mater*.

He had, of course, paid pretty dearly for his knowledge. The portion intended by the will of the Duke his grandfather to set him off in life, was diminished by one half ere it came into his possession. But on the day which entitled him to receive his fortune, and compelled him to pay his I. O. U.s, he fulfilled a promise he had often repeated to himself, of sinking the other moiety in a life rent. His connection with the more dissolute and therefore necessitous portion of the nobility, enabled him to secure for his ten thousand pounds an annuity of six hundred a-year ; which had the double advantage of increasing his income, and rendering it impossible to indu-

his passion for play—unless at his father's expense. From that period, the wild, hot-headed Adolphus Egerton tamed himself down into a cold, methodical roué. It was impossible to conceive any thing more systematic than his libertinism. His hours and habits, irregular as they would have appeared to his brother William or some country cousin, were as periodical as the changes of the moon. No barrister kept his terms more punctually than Adolphus his Newmarket engagements; no housekeeper more correctly her book of family accounts, than Adolphus his small betting-book. The consequence was, that among the sporting men of the day Egerton had acquired the name of a very steady fellow; and among women of fashion, of a very safe man. He was the *affidé* of half-a-dozen houses, forming an agreeable relief to his club-life; and had made for himself a position in the London world far exceeding that to which he was entitled as younger son of Lord Tiverton. By dint of one of those inexplicable influences which prove the goddess Fashion to be fifty times more capricious than the goddess Fortune, had he become a person of consequence.

At five-and-forty, Adolphus Egerton exhibited that hard, withered look, exclusively characteristic of the London man. After dressing during three hundred and sixty-five days per annum of five-and-twenty years with a view to confront the critical investigation of St. James's Street, Adolphus's well-cut coat and well-tied cravat had become as much a portion of himself as the skin of the Ethiopian, or the spots of the leopard. Face, features, gait, costume, all were drilled into such perfect artificiality, that it seemed scarcely possible the well-bred automaton should at any moment be subjected to the ordinary impulses of nature.

Such was the individual who was looking forward with some degree of interest to Dick Egerton's debut in London life. His elder nephew was little or nothing to him. Lord Egerton naturally succeeded to Lord Egerton. His public career was chalked out—to vote the address in parliament with a neat little speech, then subside discreetly into a vote; and, after a few seasons in town, fall a victim to some judicious mamma, and marry for the perpetuation of Earls of Tiverton;—his tailor, coach maker, and some broken-hearted girl, being paid off by his father by way of bribe, to determine his settlement in life. But to Adolphus Egerton, Dick was the natural heir;—heir to all that his well-calculated thrift left him the power of bequeathing—his niche in the great pyramid of London life, and his privileges as a man about town. When it was all over with him, the name of Egerton would still revive the echoes of White's—still be heard of in the Jockey Club—still preserve its odour of sanctity at the Travellers'—provided Dick Egerton fulfilled his early promise, and did credit to the lessons instilled into his precocious mind in his uncle's sanctum sanctorum in May Fair.

Every experienced artist has secrets to bequeath to his suc-

cessors, and the more generous professors are usually observed to single out some promising pupil, to whom they impart in their latter years the mysteries of their calling. Adolphus Egerton was fortunate in so talented an acolyte as his younger nephew, to perfect whose education was a pleasure as well as a duty. He was gratified to find Lord Egerton turn out well bred and well dressed—exclusively occupied with himself and the desire of doing exactly the right thing in exactly the right way, without falling into the flagrant tigerisms recently introduced, to the detriment of the classical school of dandyism. But in Dick Egerton's well doing, he took a personal pride. It would be a serious reflection upon *him*, the dean of the faculty, should Lord Tiverton's younger son degenerate into a second-rate man of fashion.

Adolphus had, in fact, cherished occasional misgivings that the legitimate school, of which he was so distinguished a professor, was on the decline, and the temple of fine gentlemanism, reared under the auspices of Carlton House, tottering to its fall. Of the great men illustrating the dandy epoch of his youth,

Every bright name that shed
Light o'er the land was fled;

some were in exile—some in the grave;—some at Calais—some at Coventry;—some married to *divorcées*, and estranged from female society—some to country heiresses, and lost to male society. George Robins had disposed of the paraphernalia of a dozen or so, whose place remembered them no longer—whose snuff-boxes were dispersed among the curiosity shops—whose travelling-carriages had been bought cheap by retired haberdashers—whose names were forgotten amid their daily haunts and ancient neighbourhood, except in the defaulter-lists of the clubs. Some were showing their withered faces and knocking knees at Paris—some at Florence—some at Naples—some concealing them in more obscure retreats. But of the illustrious group in which he had emerged from obscurity in the days when George IV. was regent, and Regent Street, Swallow Street—scarcely a trace remained to keep up tradition of the good old times.

In "Dicky Edge," however, Adolphus Egerton fancied he saw promise of a revival. There was a callousness about him that excited expectations. The uncle accordingly resolved that the nephew should profit by his experience, and live unharmed by the heartaches and headaches entailed upon himself by early excesses, as well as by the recollection of having dissipated half his fortune ere he possessed faculties for its enjoyment.

Dick should never have to lament, with Byron, that he had

Squander'd his whole summer ere 'twas prime.

His soul and *his* digestion should remain unimpaired. Neither the gout nor wounded affections should diminish his enjoyment of

the tranquil rubber—the well-iced glass of hock. At sixty, he should be able to sup on lobster salad without a qualm; and calculate the cards out without so much as kitting his brow, in the tenth round of the sixteenth rubber. He should be the old Parr of St. James's Street;—the Titian Vecelli of the Carltonian School of Art.

Dick Egerton, on the other hand, entertained the highest respect for his uncle. The Earl (for with him his father was only the Earl) was an excellent kind of man—a substance, of which the animus was a rent-roll and a patent of nobility—the mere type of a social position. But Adolphus was something more. Adolphus had created a name for himself—Adolphus was a personage to whom the world referred for his judgment of a race-horse, or the decision of a disputed bet; a sort of Lord Chancellor of the realms of vice and folly, whose decrees were issued with a gravity that might have done honour to the woolstack. Dick Egerton never entered without deference the little den in May Fair, whose opinions were quoted with respect in circles where those of his father's dull mansion in St. James's Square would not have obtained a hearing.

"Who was that person to whom I saw you speaking yesterday at the corner of Pall-Mall?" inquired Adolphus one morning when his nephew dropped in to a breakfast-table, which the pearl of valets took care should be the best appointed of any bachelor-breakfast in town.

"Yesterday?—Pall-Mall?—A tall, good-looking fellow, with dark hair?"

"I did not notice his height or hair; but his appearance was far from such as to justify your being seen with him opposite to Sams's door."

"An awful coat, I admit—the regular Trinity cut; but I could not avoid speaking to him—it was Julius Egerton."

"And who, under heaven, is Julius Egerton?"

"He has distinguished himself very much, you know, at Cambridge."

"Indeed I know nothing about him. William Egerton's son, perhaps?"

"Exactly."

"But what necessity was there for your stopping to talk to him in one of the most frequented spots in London?—Conceive what any man must have thought who saw you listening to an individual whose healthy, animated face proved him to be perfectly new about town, and without the slightest air of fashion entitling him to become old!"

"My father desired me to be civil to my cousins whenever they came in my way. It seems my uncle Pelham has taken them under his wing."

"Tiverton has the most extraordinary notions!—However,

when he bade you be civil to them, I don't suppose he meant you to go the length of stopping to speak to them in St. James's Street. You are not sufficiently established to run such risks—I could scarcely venture to do it myself. Apropos, my dear Dick, don't let me hear you talk again of your 'father' and your 'cousins.' There is nothing more indecent than public allusions to family relationships. The world is not obliged to know any thing of your connections; the world is not supposed to know that you *have* a father. Above all, too, your '*uncle Pelham!*'—Call him the Duke of Pelham in mixed company, or old Pelham among men with whom you are intimate;—but your '*uncle!*'—you will be calling *me* your uncle next!"

"And what would you have me call you?" inquired his nephew, eager to vex him in return for his reprimand.

"Egerton, or Adolphus, or Dol, or any thing you choose. And pray, is this person—this Julius Egerton—living in London, to be running against one every moment?"

"Old Pelham has given him a living, or the reversion of a living, somewhere in Sussex."

"A parson!—umph!—Just the cross to have been expected from an intermarriage between a younger brother and a school-master's daughter!—I suppose poor William has a tribe of sons.—I should not be surprised to find that one of them was articulated to an attorney!—What an incalculable number of dreadful consequences arise from the folly of a love match."

"I met Julius Egerton last year at Storby Castle," observed Dick, feeling that some apology was necessary for his familiarity with his country cousin. "Storby is a Trinity man, and Egerton is one of their *lions*."

"So much the better. Let him rise in the church as high as he chooses. I shouldn't much care if he were to become a Bishop, as I shall be most likely in my coffin before the family is disgraced by a Right Reverend. But, *en attendant*, pray don't let me see you talking to a man whom nobody ever saw or heard of."

"I am not likely to put your patience to the test. I was civil to him during the month we spent together at Storby; for the fellow rides well, is a good shot, and has all the other instincts of a gentleman. It is not his fault that he is in the church: I suppose his father had no other way of getting him provided for. But I am happy to tell you he is only passing through London on his way to his living."

"So much the better. I was afraid you might think of introducing him in St. James's Square. Lady Tiverton cannot be too careful. A strange-looking person of that description seen in her set, and it might take her half a dozen seasons to get over the consequences. A woman in *her* position, who has daughters to marry, should never admit a person into her house who is not as well known, or the son of some one as well known, as the dial of the

clock at the Horse Guards ! The moment you have explanations to make about people, they are not fit for your society. So much for your edification !—And now, let us go and look over the morning papers."

Very differently was the interview between the cousins dwelt upon by Julius Egerton, on his way back to Helstone Parsonage.

The old Doctor, whose life was now a perpetual doze in his easy-chair, (imbecile in every one's opinion but his own,) had long ceded to his grandson the spiritual direction of the parish, contenting himself with pocketing great tithes and small, and perplexing poor Julius with the advice he was no longer capacitated to give ; and young Egerton was by this time aware that the smallest curacy in the three kingdoms would have afforded him a more agreeable professional start than the house where, though a man, and a distinguished one, he was still treated as a boy. Old Spry, even in his dotage, was unable to divest himself of the habits of the schoolmaster ; or Miss Rachel, of those bequeathed to her (with the care of the "boys" and little Olivia) by her deceased mamma. Though proud and fond of her nephew, she could not forbear tormenting him with reprimands about rubbing his shoes on the door-mat ; or intruding into his study at midnight with advice about putting out the fire and candle. While representing him far and near as "a Daniel come to judgment ; yea, a Daniel !" she seemed to think him incapable of being trusted out of her sight.

All this was borne by Julius with exemplary patience, considering how largely he was endowed with those fine faculties of genius which are supposed to convey the privilege of irritability. But he was aware that the reversion of the living had been solicited for him by his father, on the express condition of his serving as a bondsman during the survivorship of Dr. Spry ; and that aunt Rachel, though a troublesome, officious woman, was sincere in her attachment to her sister and her sister's family ; that her painstaking thrift was intended for their future benefit ; and that, despite a few weaknesses and infirmities, the heart of the fidgety spinster was in the right place.

It was not on him alone that her privilege of persecution was exercised. Her pretence of setting all the world to rights extended from the tambour-frame at Hurley House to the easy-chair of the old Doctor, whom she would not allow to put a grain more salt in his basin of broth than comported with her notions of the wholesome. As she said, she had really some right to dictate.—As she said, she had been making a slave of herself from her earliest years ; and the poor old gentleman not being ready enough to remind her, that the greater part of her labours were the creation of her own officiousness, she remained a self-asserted martyr and a self-asserting despot.

As far as possible, young Egerton continued to remain apart

from the family, the atmosphere of whose trifling parlour was as overpowering to his body as the triviality of their pursuits to his mind. It was not for one of his age and endowments to listen to the minute recital of the morning papers, read aloud leisurely and audibly by Miss Rachel to the old Doctor, with notes commentatorial upon the private history of every Lord Thomas and Lady Catherine figuring in the most insignificant paragraphs.—One was cousin to the cousin of Dr. Spry's former pupil, the Marquis of Easthampton; another, grandson to a former pupil of the late Mrs. Spry; and even when no immediate chain of connection could be established between them and Helstone Parsonage, there was Debrett to be consulted for their birth and parentage, arms and motto—that very identical copy purchased upon the union of the Hon. William, second son of the Earl of Tiverton, with Olivia Sophia, second daughter of Marmaduke Spry, D.D., with all its interleavings and corrections of the last five-and-twenty years! No wonder that Miss Rachel should be so familiar with the marriages and intermarriages of the aristocracy, since her own hand had been the faithful chronicler of their proceedings; and, though the Doctor and his daughter sometimes talked of replacing their favourite volumes by a newer edition, she clung to the interleaved copy, every page of which was as much her own creation as the Earl of Tiverton (when promoted from his Barony of Egerton) the king's. To use her own expression, the information lay handier in her old favourite, Debrett.

It was not from her nephew that the proposal of replacement emanated. Julius entertained the utmost reverence for the two well-thumbed tomes which, by affording occupation to Miss Rachel's crow-quill pen, secured him some respite from her interference.

"Well, what was stirring in town?" inquired the maiden aunt, laying aside this favourite diversion and her spectacles, on the evening of Julius's return to Helstone.

"Nothing very interesting. More disturbances, I fear, in Canada; but"—

"I don't care for public news," interrupted Miss Rachel; "one has enough of that from the newspapers."

"I was told that the Bishop of Rochester was seriously ill."

"That is news, my dear! Whom are we likely to have in his place?" cried the calculating spinster.

"I did not inquire. The loss of so good a man would be severely felt, not only by his family, but"—

"Yes; I know. But it was very generally said, when he was ill last year, that Dr. Wilks was first on the list for a bishopric. Think what a stroke for *you*, my dear Julius, if we were to get Dr. Wilks"—

"It would be a heavy stroke for the diocese were the present bishop to drop. His family, too—a family of"—

"Just hand me down the second volume of Debrett—no, the

first—no, the second. Let me see !—Where are the Irish Dukes ! —‘ Third son of the late Lord John Monteagle.’ Yes ! —just as you say—seven children. I remember inserting, two years ago, the birth of Mrs. Monteagle’s last—‘ a daughter ? ’—exactly ;—I see it *was* a daughter, and the one before, a boy. The eldest child (who must now be sixteen) was also a daughter. How very provoking !—I have hardly left room at the bottom of the page to announce the poor Bishop’s decease ! ”

“ I trust you may not be called upon for the task. There is not a more eminent divine on the ”——

“ Did you call at Cowie’s about the plated toast-rack ? ” interrupted Miss Rachel.

“ I am sorry to say that ”——

“ Now, pray, my dear, don’t tell me that you forgot it ! ” cried the lady, snappishly. “ It was only the second article on your list.”

“ The first, which was a commission at Hatchard’s, I executed the day I arrived. I have brought down all the works on your list ; but unluckily, yesterday, as I was proceeding to Long Acre about the toast-rack ”——

“ How very inconsiderate ! ” interrupted Miss Rachel, prepared by the qualifying adverb for the worst.—“ And when you knew that I had set my mind upon that toast-rack.”

“ I met at the corner of St. James’s Street a person whom it gave me so much pleasure to see, that, I confess, I lost all recollection of your commission,” resumed her nephew.

“ Ay, ay ! I prophesied before you set out, you know, that you would forget half.”

“ At all events, I have not fulfilled your prediction by bringing you home “ a gross of green spectacles with copper rims and shagreen cases,” replied Julius, good-humouredly. “ At the moment of setting off home, I recollected my omission and procured a substitute, which I trust you will accept instead of the ”——

“ My dear Julius, this is really very attentive and handsome of you ! ” exclaimed Miss Spry. “ But I assure you, my dear, I would much rather have had the thing I asked for instead of this beautiful piece of plate, which is too rich for everyday use.”

“ On the contrary, plated articles are unfit for daily use ; while silver is calculated ”——

“ And pray,” again interrupted Miss Rachel, “ *who* was the person you were so delighted to see as to forget my list of commissions ?—Some college chum, I suppose ? ”

“ No ! my cousin, Dick Egerton.”

“ Your what, my dear ? ”

“ Lord Tiverton’s second son.”

“ Reach me down the other volume of Debrett, Julius. Page 164.—Ay, ay !—See how naturally it opens at the Tiverton peerage !—‘ Second son, the Hon. Richard Egerton Egerton, born the

13th December, 18—' Ah, my dear Julius, well do I remember making that unfortunate entry."

"Unfortunate?"

"So long as Lord and Lady Egerton had but one son, there was some little chance, you know, for my poor, dear brother-in-law, or, at all events, for poor, dear John; but, as I said to poor, dear Livy (for we happened to be staying at Hurley at the time), this odious second son puts an extinguisher on all our hopes. But how came you acquainted with him?"

"Egerton was staying at Storby Castle when I was there last year."

"And you never mentioned it to me before!"

"Inveterate as you are against Lord Tiverton's family, I thought it would annoy you to talk about him."

"Inveterate, indeed!—and reason good!—From the day of Lord Tiverton's succeeding to the title (let me see, give me that volume of Debrett again), six years and three months ago, not so much as an invitation to any member of his brother's family! Certainly, the late lord *had* the decency to invite my poor dear brother-in-law, summer after summer; and, though he knew that nothing would induce William to accept the invitation, the attention was the same. But now, not the smallest token of civility."

"Lord Tiverton was offended at my father's applying to the Duke of Pelham for a living, when he had so much preferment in his gift; it was like publishing to the world that he had no reliance on his brother."

"*That* I suppose is the view of the case suggested by your friend, Mr. Richard Egerton Egerton?" cried aunt Rachel, eager for the honour of a measure of her own concoction.

"No; it has always been my opinion. Lord Tiverton procured John his commission, and interested himself about his promotion, and would probably have done as much for me had my father waited."

"Waited, forsooth!—waited till his own brother felt the workings of a brotherly spirit!—Julius, it is monstrous to talk of such a thing. Depend upon it, Lord and Lady Tiverton are two heartless, unprincipled people."

"Not if I am to judge of them by their son. Dick Egerton is the most charming fellow; the cleverest, the most agreeable"——

"I suppose he thought it amusing to show off before one of his clodpole cousins."

"On the contrary, I was a fortnight in the house with him before he discovered the connection between us. Some misconception on Lord Storby's part, or his own, induced him to fancy that I was the son of an Irish baronet; and so far was the explanation of our near relationship from producing any increase of attention, that I must confess there has been less cordiality between us as cousins than as common acquaintances."

"He has never invited you, then, to St. James's Square?"

"If his father and mother are such people as you describe, he is not likely to enjoy the privilege of inviting his friends. But he has had no opportunity. Egerton was going straight from Storby Castle to Paris, where he has been ever since; and, when I met him yesterday, I told him at once that I was in town only for a few hours."

"Lady Tiverton was one of the great beauties of her day. Is her son good looking?"

"I never saw finer features. And Storby informs me that Egerton's two sisters are the handsomest girls in town."

"You might surely have made that a pretext for wishing to get presented to the family?" pleaded aunt Rachel.

"I felt no wish to make their acquaintance. The Tivertons have been most ungracious to my father and mother; and as to my personal interests, thanks to the Duke of Pelham, they are secured."

"Secured?—By the promise of a living of four hundred and eighty pounds per annum, out of which the demands upon you will be considerable. You call *that* being provided for? You call *that* being independent of Lord Tiverton? Reflect for a moment, my dear, upon what you are saying! Are you likely to content yourself for life with four hundred and eighty pounds a-year? Supposing, for instance, you should wish to marry, your income (even when you attain the enjoyment of it, which may not be for ten or fifteen years to come), will not enable you to support a wife and family; unless, indeed, you should follow up the scheme I have so often recommended, and marry Georgiana Heseltine, who will not have a penny less than eighty thousand pounds, and who"—

"Since you have entered into that endless chapter, my dear aunt," cried Julius, rising, and preparing to retreat into his own room, "I must wish you good-night. My absence from home has doubled the usual business on my hands. Pray forgive me if I proceed to work." And, without waiting for Miss Rachel's detainer, Julius hurried away, dreading a renewal of one of her most tiresome themes for dissertation.

Julius had really, however, a world of business on his hands.

But on retiring to his chamber, Julius had other occupation than to prepare his Sunday's sermon, examine the list of pretenders to parish benevolence, or even cast his longing eyes over the pages of the new works he had brought down from town. Julius was beginning to open the uncut volume of life, where every fresh page affords such serious matter for contemplation. Glibly as he had expressed himself to Miss Rachel touching the merits of his cousin, he was secretly hurt by Dick Egerton's altered mode of greeting. However unversed in the fastidious glances of fashionable life, he could not but discern the embarrassment of Egerton's manner when he stopped him and extended his hand. There was none of

the frank cordiality which had prevailed between them at Storby. Either Egerton had since conceived a disparaging personal opinion of him, or aunt Rachel's surmise was just, and the family at St. James's Square wished to establish an impassable barrier between themselves and the family at Hurley House.

This notion was deeply mortifying to the feelings of Julius. It was neither his pride nor his self-interest that took the alarm; and Lord Egerton would have been welcome to withdraw *his* hand without extracting more than a smile from the lips of his condemned cousin. But towards the younger brother he felt otherwise. Of all the men he had ever seen, Dick Egerton's joyous, and apparently ingenuous, disposition most attracted his regard. He liked him—he almost loved him—and longed to be liked or loved in return. The friendly advances made by Dick, while yet unaware of their relationship, had induced him to hope that the preference was mutual; but the coldness of the averted eye in their recent interview convinced poor Julius that he was mistaken, or that some unexplained cause had put an end to the intimacy.

It was in vain that the young pastor assured himself, "It was of no great consequence—that the world had friends in store for him as valuable, if not as fascinating, as his fashionable cousin—and, above all, that the regard of his warm-hearted brother, and the tender affection of his sister, ought to render him independent of casual friendships."

Still, as he turned the page of the heavy folio before him, his thoughts kept reverting to the gay demeanour and speaking countenance of Dick Egerton as he had first beheld him, keeping the table in a roar, or a circle of accomplished women on the attractive, in the brilliant saloons of Storby Castle. At that period, Egerton had actually exerted himself to make a conquest of the wonderful Trinity man, who was likely to make a sensation in the world of letters; had abstained from battues to spend mornings with him in picturesque excursions, or in listening to scraps of ancient poesy, to which the exquisite taste of Julius imparted a double charm. It was difficult not to revert to all this—it was impossible to revert to it without pain.

How, in fact, was a person so untaught in the ways of the world as the Admirable Crichton of Trinity—the saint of Helstone Parsonage—to conjecture the enormous distance that separated him from the younger son of the Earl of Tiverton; how was he to know that, though cousins by blood (the nearest removal from brotherhood), there was as much distinction between them as between a lord-mayor and a chimney-sweep? For Dick Egerton, with talents and connection, was in a situation to aspire to any thing below the throne; while all the promotion likely to befall Dr. Spry's grandson, was to progress from a needy curate into a poor parson.

His musings ended with a heavy sigh, in a resolve to cont'

himself with the affection of his family and the reverence of the flock committed to his charge ; which, long accustomed to the mumbled generalities of its superannuated rector, was so infatuated by the fervid eloquence of its new teacher as already to have sur-named him "The St. John of Helstone."

Undisturbed, meanwhile, by the contempts of the elder branch of the family, the Egertons of Hurley House pursued the even tenor of their way, happier than at any preceding epoch of their lives. They were neither richer nor greater than of old. On the contrary, had aunt Rachel's favourite volumes been of later date, they would have reminded the Egertons that, instead of figuring as direct descendants of an earl, they were now classed in the peerage among the collaterals. But Mrs. Egerton's plain good sense troubled itself no further with such details. She and her husband had taken their own position in the world. They were respected, as unpretending respectability is sure to be ; and as to William, instead of piquing himself upon his Honourableness, he was twenty times prouder of his pretty daughter and handsome sons, all three of whom (as he was fond of relating to the strangers to whom he was introduced on the Pantiles) "were settled in life, and in a way to do well in the world."

John Egerton was at present with his regiment at Malta, working his way to a company ; Julius, preaching all the dissenting chapels empty within five miles of Helstone ; and Harry, a junior lieutenant on board the *Asia*, was cruising in the Mediterranean. The young men were doing credit to themselves and their parents ; and though their absence made a sad gap in the Hurley circle—though the Christmas fireside was no longer noisy, nor the summer expeditions to Eridge or Hever so merry as of old—Mary was becoming an object of considerable attraction to the house. Letters from the boys, too, formed a constant source of interest to the gratified father and mother. As to Julius, though settled only twenty miles from home, he seldom found an opportunity to ride over ; but then, as Miss Rachel was fond of observing, "his attendance on the old Doctor set her completely at liberty ; and she was twice as often able to spend a week at Hurley for a glimpse at the gay doings of Tunbridge Wells."

These visits, though accepted with respect by Mrs. Egerton in memory of the former motherly care of her elder sister, were looked forward to with some dread by Mary, for whose establishment in life aunt Rachel was apt to indulge in manœuvres akin to those which had made her sister Livy the wife of the old doctor's honourable pupil ; but still more by Mary's favourite friend, Georgiana Heseltine, the only daughter of a retired East India captain, whose park was divided by a low fence from the grounds of Hurley House. Miss Heseltine was, in fact, as much afraid that Miss Rachel might provide a wife for her father, as

Mary Egerton that she would take some extraordinary means of finding her a husband.

On the summer succeeding Julius's memorable visit to London, for instance, Miss Rachel came to spend a fortnight with the Egertons, as if for the express purpose of introducing a drop of hyssop into their cup of domestic sweets. She was angry with them for being so abjectly contented with their lot, when there was a spot in their destinies that required very little rubbing to fester into a serious evil.

"Is it not amazingly lucky," observed Mrs. Egerton, as soon as her sister was established in the cozy little chamber which went by the name of aunt Rachel's room, "that the Asia should have been appointed to the Mediterranean station! Harry will probably pass the greater part of the winter at Malta, and the boys see each other every day."

"Humph! yes, lucky enough, as you say; it is as well for brothers to be as much as possible together in their boyhood, for when they grow to be men, the chances are they will pass each other in the street without speaking."

"John and Harry pass each other in the street without speaking? My dear sister, what an idea to enter your head!"—cried Mrs. Egerton, with indignation.

"Not John and Harry, but Captain Egerton and Colonel Egerton may know as little of each other twenty years hence as William Egerton, Adolphus Egerton, and my Lord Tiverton, do now."

"I rather think not!" cried Olivia, with spirit. "In the first place, Captain Egerton and Colonel Egerton (if, please God, my two sons ever attain such rank) will continue to feel towards each other as brothers who have been brought up in a loving family, by impartial parents, not like the unfortunate sons of such a woman as the old Countess."

"The old Countess, who, by the way, has been pinned down at Bath by rheumatic gout these four years past without so much as a thought of her sons or their squabbles, cannot, I imagine, be the cause of Lord Tiverton's sending his brother to Coventry."

"Lord Tiverton has not sent his brother to Coventry. It was he, you know, who got John promoted."

"A lieutenancy in a marching regiment!—a fine gift, forsooth, to a nephew who, in case he dies without issue, must succeed to his property, from an uncle who has votes in both houses, and not a favour on earth to ask of government.—No, no, Livy, my dear!—Every body knows that the Earl is a most unnatural brother, or he would have invited you all long ago to Tiverton Castle."

"And what should I do when I got there, between his fine lady wife and fantastical lady daughters?"

"A very selfish view of the case, my dear; you ought to be thinking of poor Mary!"

"The very reason I feel no regret that an intimacy should have dropped which might have led her into society beyond her sphere; an indulgence sure to end in mortification and disappointment."

"I cannot consider her father's family society beyond her sphere," remonstrated Miss Rachel, primly. "Mary Egerton has a right to move in the circle of either her father or her mother's family; but by making a match among the former she is more likely to advance the interests of her brothers."

"I should be sorry my poor girl's happiness were risked for the sake of giving a lift to my sons," cried Mrs. Egerton, warmly.

"Does it follow that a marriage must turn out unlucky because the bridegroom happens to be prime minister or lord chancellor?"

"A prime minister or lord chancellor!—*now* you are romancing indeed!"—cried Olivia, with a laugh.

"And why not, pray?—The whole cabinet is entertained in succession by Lord and Lady Tiverton. Only notice the list of their dinner parties and routs in the 'Morning Post!' And why should not Mary have as good a chance among them as others?—Every body admits that she is the prettiest girl this season at the Wells."

"Every body says so to *us*. However, I do not want to decry my child. She is better than handsome—an excellent daughter and sister."

"I tell you she is amazingly admired, and I have no doubt that, if once introduced into good society, she would catch up some match likely to be the making of her family."

"I don't want her to catch up a match, and I flatter myself she *does* move in good society," persisted Mrs. Egerton warmly. "We dine with Lord Abergavenny twice a year, and at Summerhill, and at"—

"Pho, pho, pho! what use is all that, so long as you are not taken up by Lord and Lady Tiverton?—A poor Honourable, who is not acknowledged by the head of his family!"

"But William *is* acknowledged by the head of his family!" interrupted Olivia. "How can he be otherwise than acknowledged by his own brother?"

"Ay, ay—a pretty brother, forsooth, who allows a nephew, the second wrangler of his year, to go plodding on with sixty pounds' salary as a country curate, when he does not know what to do with his church preferment!"

"That, I fear, is our own fault," resumed Olivia.

"And who instructs his lordship's sons, pray," persisted Miss Rachel, "to pass their cousins in the street without speaking?—Such a young man as Julius, too!"

"What do you mean about Julius?" inquired Mrs. Egerton, with reddening cheeks; and the acquaintance formed by her son at

Storby Castle was forthwith recounted to her, in a tone intended to rouse her utmost indignation.

"Lord Tiverton has never so much as seen the boys," said she, mildly, at the close of the vexatious narration, "or he might view them in the light that we do. I often regret that, instead of keeping up the family grudge and standing so much on his own dignity, William did not take them with him straight to St. James's Square on his father's death, and demand his brother's protection. But then, to be sure, Lady Tiverton is such a terrible woman!"

"What makes her so very terrible, pray? She was born inferior in rank and fortune to your husband—(see Debrett, page 845)—one of the five daughters of an Irish viscount, without a guinea to her fortune!"

"Well, she makes it up in pride; but don't let us talk of her, it only puts unchristianly thoughts into my head; and, as I have no secrets from William, I am apt to let out things about the family that vex him. Have you brought me no letter from Julius?"

"Not a word—not even a line to his sister! Between ourselves, Livy, I am convinced the poor fellow is writing a book; he sits up half the night, and, instead of his former brilliant complexion, is beginning to look as sallow as a Spanish Don."

"With his fine line of countenance, Julius can never look otherwise than handsome."

"It's all very well for *us* to say so—I only wish we could get Miss Heseltine to think so."

"Georgy Heseltine?—I hope poor Julius does not turn his thoughts that way," cried Mrs. Egerton. "Mary, who is in all her secrets, was saying yesterday that John and Harry were quite the favourites at Eastwick—Harry with the old captain, and Jack with his daughter."

"Girls of Miss Heseltine's age are sure to be taken by the eclaw of a red coat!" sneered Miss Rachel. "As to Captain Heseltine, I forgive *him*, because, though the scrapes brought on by his absence of mind rendered it desirable for him to retire from his profession, his heart is always at sea and his mind too. He passes his life in reading voyages of discovery, and cogitating over them. When one spends the evening at Eastwick, he is sure to blurt out, after a dead silence, some strange remark about the New Zealanders, or the Esquimaux Indians, or whatever out-of-the-way people he has read of last. He likes Harry Egerton as a spirited lad who chose to go into the navy; but, depend upon it, Julius is the one who would suit him as a son-in-law. Julius would read to him, and attend the Geographical, African, North-Western Passage, and all the other societies, with him. Julius would reason him out of his oddities."

"Then he would be very much to blame," cried Mrs. Egerton. "Captain Heseltine is an excellent neighbour, and a very good man; and it would be great presumption on the part of my son

to begin lecturing a person old enough to be his grandfather. I should be sorry to find him forget the respect due to our friend, Captain Heseltine."

"Or to your friend Captain Heseltine's one hundred and twenty thousand pounds," added aunt Rachel significantly. "All your respect for him, however, would do little towards securing his daughter for your son, were it not for my pushing matters forward."

"Matters relating to love and matrimony," observed Mrs. Egerton, "get on best when left to themselves; and as neither of my sons is in a situation to make proposals to the daughter of a rich man like Captain Heseltine, I should be sorry to find the good understanding between the families broken up by any appearance of what he might construe into interested views."

"Interested, indeed!" retorted her sister. "Ay, ay, Livy, I see how it is! You have caught the infection of Egerton's listless, lukewarm ways, as if good-luck were to come and hunt you out while you lay asleep. 'Help yourself, and Heaven will help you,' is the only modern proverb worth learning by rote.—However, I have done. All I intended was for the good of the family, and if you are afraid that my zeal for my nephew should give grounds to Captain Heseltine for considering you and William Egerton shabby people, God forbid that I should ever stir another step in the matter! As I said before, my dear Livy, I have done."

Mrs. Egerton knew very well that she had *not* done. But, perceiving that her sister was vexed, she wisely dropped the subject; trusting only that, during her visit to Hurley, Miss Rachel might not, by some flagrant act of pushing, excite the suspicions of their Eastwick neighbour.

Captain Heseltine, however, was a man into whose mind suspicion never entered. Rarely was he sufficiently himself for perception of passing events—never for anticipation of those to come. Though present in the body, he was usually absent in the mind; and for any share he took in the amusements of society, might just as well have remained immured in the study, hung round with charts and garnished with bookcases, into which he had retreated from the activities of professional life. Profoundly afflicted by the loss of the excellent wife who had borne with his oddities, and devoted her life to averting their disagreeable results, Captain Heseltine had retired to Eastwick with little more than half the fortune which East India captains usually intend to realize;—that is to say, he had not thrown away his first one hundred and fifty thousand pounds in speculating to procure a second.

Fortunately, Georgiana was old enough at her mother's death for the prudent wife to point out her father's infirmities of mind to her care and respect; and, at a very early age, Miss Heseltine quietly set about the task of managing his affairs and ministering his comfort. But for her prudent management, his house and

fortune would have been suffered to go to wreck, while the Captain was pursuing imaginary voyages on the surface of one of Adams's globes, and bewildering his understanding with computations of the atmospheric phenomena of the Andes.

Baffled in the tastes which had originally suggested his choice of a profession, the Captain found no resource for his restlessness but imaginary locomotion. While his neighbour, William Egerton, seemed to fancy that the universe was comprised within the hedges bounding the twenty acres of grass land lying under the authority of his scythe, old Heseltine was conscious of the existence of nothing within five hundred miles of him—a haze obscured from his view all proximate objects. For *him* there was no Eastwick, no Hurley, no Tunbridge Wells, no London; the nearest points of which he took cognizance were the Hebrides and the Giant's Causeway.

Without in the slightest degree failing in respect for her father, who, in moral points, was a worthy and estimable man, Georgiana Heseltine, a lively, intelligent girl, was fully on her guard against the evil consequences of his simplicity of character. In fifty instances she had saved him, without apparent interposition, from becoming the dupe of the designing, to whom his abstraction of mind pointed him out as an easy prey. But there was a person who excited her misgivings almost as much as the sharpeners, who, in the course of their professional visits to the Wells, had contrived to establish a footing at Eastwick; a person against whom her regard for the family at Hurley House prevented her adopting preventive measures.

During the five years that had elapsed since her mother's death the Egertons had been her daily companions; the matronly heart of Mrs. Egerton being sorely moved towards the delicate little girl of fourteen, who, in her crape and bombazine, laboured to dry up her filial tears in order to become a cheerful companion to her bereaved father; and almost from the day of Georgiana's instalment in her new home, Mary Egerton had become an adopted sister. The young Egertons having already quitted Hurley, the inconvenience was avoided of a too familiar intimacy between young people of an opposite sex; and there was consequently no drawback to the friendly footing established by such immediate neighbourship, that three-fourths of the Hurley paddock were skirted by the shrubbery palings of Eastwick Lodge.

In a worldly point of view the intimacy was well assorted; for though Captain Heseltine was in the enjoyment of an income sixfold the amount of William Egerton's thousand a year, the prefix of "Honourable," which has been already described as throwing considerable weight into the scale in such a spot as the neighbourhood of Tunbridge Wells, assigned to the Egertons higher social distinctions; and Hurley House was visited by divers parks and castles, which ignored the existence of Eastwick. This nice

adjustment of claims served only to tranquillize the scruples of the poorer neighbours ; for as to the Captain, having once received the assurance of the auctioneer who sold him the estate, that his nearest neighbour was a gentleman of the most undoubted respectability, he felt no hesitation in allowing his daughter to spend several hours of every day in company with Mary and her mother ; who were kind enough to let her share their rides and walks, while *he* was grilling himself in imagination in the Torrid route to Timbuctoo, or quaking in the perilous regions of thick-ribbed ice of Arctic adventure. He was fully alive to the advantage of that matronly protection which enabled him so to extend his mental wanderings as never to be within a thousand leagues of home.

Habits of early independence, meanwhile, tended to mature the character of Georgiana. She had been compelled to judge and act not only for herself but for her father ; and it was perhaps fortunate that the companionship of so good a woman as Mrs. Egerton, and so gentle and feminine a girl as Mary, prevented her from acquiring the opinionativeness too often the result of such a position.

But if the influence of her friends at Hurley served to soften Georgiana's manners, it did not suffice to blind her to the officiousness of Miss Rachel Spry. Dearly as she loved the Egertons, she had no patience with the fussy aunt, as dictatorial as if her opinions were worth listening to, who was constantly annoying her with advice and instructions. The Captain, like most studious men, could not bear his seclusion to be broken in upon ; but Miss Rachel, who had been too long dominatress over the pupils at Helstone, and of late years over its feeble incumbent, to apprehend having her determination resisted, was in the habit of walking as resolutely into his study as if she had not been fifty times assured that the mere opening of the door sufficed to derange his calculations ; and, what was worse, she seemed to find it as difficult to go as easy to come.

For some time Georgiana resisted. The moment she caught sight at a distance of Miss Rachel's faded nankeen pelisse, green veil, and amber spectacles crossing the lawn, she hastened to lock the doors of the vestibule leading to her father's study, in order to monopolize the key during Miss Rachel's visitation ; and Captain Heseltine, though unaware of her interposition in his favour, attested by his self-gratulations at dinner on having had the morning to himself that the manœuvre had prospered.

But to repel the attacks of a gossiping old maid, with her time at her own disposal, is a hopeless task. So long as an auger hole remained, Miss Rachel contrived to creep in ; and when, in the sequel, Georgiana discovered that her father's dislike of the lady in the green veil and nankeen pelisse was gradually subsiding—

† he quoted her as a very superior woman, and ceased to com-

plain of the frequency of her inroads—she trembled at the idea that the tiresome woman's visits might purport more than a mere disposal of her leisure, and that there might be "miching malicho" in aunt Rachel.

It was not difficult to discover by what means the nankeen pelisse had recommended itself to the favour of Captain Heseltine. Laying aside the two courtly volumes forming hitherto the limit of her studies, Miss Rachel had exchanged Debrett for such articles of the leading reviews of the day as regarded the favourite works of the geographico maniac. Aided by their promptings, "ignorance itself became a plummet over him." Miss Rachel was able to correct all his errors—to set bounds to his illimitable vagaries. Thanks to the Edinburgh and Quarterly computers of millions of miles and billions of cubic feet, she could reprove the blunders of Sir John Ross, and remove the landmarks set up by Sir Edward Parry, or Captain Back. She had arguments upon the nature of tides and the variabilities of temperature at her fingers' ends; and wherever Captain Heseltine's wanderings were directed, Nepaul or Mexico—China or Peru—there was Miss Rachel in advance of him, to prevent his being bamboozled with travellers' wonders, or falling a prey to the delusions of designing quartomongers.

Though at first harassed by her opposition, the Captain, on finding her assertions justified by subsequent discoveries, began to consider her a very wonderful woman. *He* did not dip into such trivialties as reviews or magazines—poor flimsy pamphlets, unadorned by maps or plates; and Solomon can scarcely have regarded the Queen of Sheba with greater reverence than did the poor deluded owner of Eastwick Lodge the wise woman of Helstone.

Long after discovering the nature of the charm worked by the Circe in the nankeen pelisse, Miss Heseltine hesitated to assign a motive to her incantations. Georgiana was then only seventeen, and nothing could be more odiously apparent than the eligibility of her father's taking a second wife to introduce his daughter into society—a daughter, more especially, whose pecuniary prospects were so brilliant. It was only too probable, therefore, that Miss Rachel, so "accustomed," as the advertisements say, "to tuition," should aspire to the honour of becoming her chaperon and the mistress of Eastwick Lodge: and feeling that, with such a mother-in-law, even Eastwick Lodge would be insupportable, Georgiana grew doubly resolute against her incursions.

She was on the alert whenever Miss Rachel Spry was staying at Hurley House. As far as could be done without offence to Mary Egerton and her mother, she contrived to wave the flaming sword against her ingress. All her cajolements to herself, all her flatteries to the old gentleman, were met with the most repellent coldness.

That Miss Rachel was courting *her* for her favourite nephew, was a thing which never entered the head of a girl so insensible to her own attractions as Georgiana. Of the three young Egertons, John, the lively, dashing soldier, was the only one who had ever paid her more than the decent attention due to a guest in their father's house ; and even had any of them proved as assiduous to her as Miss Rachel to her father, Georgiana would have considered it the natural consequence of her intimacy with his sister ; but that the grave silent Julius could be thought of as a suitable husband for her merry, active self, was a conjecture too extravagant to be entertained. Had any one assigned such a motive for the assiduities of Rachel Spry, Georgiana Heseltine would have shrugged her shoulders at their want of discernment.

Such was the state of affairs between Hurley House and Eastwick Lodge when the satisfaction of a fine summer's day was broken up by the sudden appearance of Mr. Egerton's good-humoured face over the shrubbery-palings, to announce that Miss Rachel had arrived the preceding night to spend a week or two at Hurley.

"I dare say she would have been here to ask you how you do by this time," continued he, unaware that other people were less indulgent than himself toward the foibles of his troublesome sister-in-law,—“but she was off to the Wells directly after breakfast on a shopping expedition. You ladies have always a yard or two of sarsnet or calico in prospect, without which it is impossible to exist another day ; and so Miss Spry took the donkey-cart and trotted off the moment she found Olivia had business at home that prevented her going out till after luncheon.”

“Mary, then, is gone with her aunt ?” inquired Miss Heseltine.

“No, aunt Rachel always prefers bargain-driving without witnesses. She is gone alone.”

This intelligence was quickly confirmed by a glimpse of Mary Egerton's muslin gown and straw bonnet through the trees of the shrubbery ; and, on her approach, Mr. Egerton nodded his good bye, and set off to make the tour of what he called his farm, while the two girls continued their walk together.

Eastwick was one of those pretty, compact country-seats peculiar to England. The house scarcely exceeded a villa in dimensions, yet fulfilled all the exactions of our luxurious notions of the comfortable ; with a farm of about a hundred acres in extent, capable of providing for the consumption of the house, at an expense of some hundreds a year to the proprietor, if pretending to the name of gentleman-farmer. The whole was in perfect keeping. The paddock (only affecting to be a park because the lady of the stockbroker, from whose assignees Captain Heseltine had purchased the property, could not content herself with less) was belted with a beautiful shrubbery, overlooking a view of considerable beauty and extent ; and house, offices, and gardens maintained

that admirable relative proportion only to be seen in new places, springing full-grown and full-armed, like the goddess of Wisdom, from the brain of the projectors; while ancient family seats, which derive a wing from the wealthy marriage of one occupant, and are probably robbed of a copse or avenue by the prodigality of the next generation, are sure to exhibit the inequalities of varying fortunes.

The house, thanks to the extravagant vanity of the stockbroker's wife, had been richly furnished only a year before the Heseltines took possession. All that the old gentleman might have lacked taste and the young lady courage to effect, was done to their hand; excepting in the arrangements of her flower-garden, Georgiana had attempted nothing, yet all was as gay, as elegant, and as enchanting as poor old Hurley was square, cumbrous, dull, and unornamental. Between the dingy brick-house of four-stories, with a pyracanthus covering the front, and an old-fashioned door adorned with a brass-knocker adorning the centre, standing in a fore court with posts and chains, and separated from the fields behind by a haha, which Mrs. Egerton had chosen for the roominess of its nurseries, and number of its closets—and the Palladian-looking stone mansion, with its airy portico, standing on a well-wooded knoll, which Captain Heseltine had chosen because within a morning's drive from Leadenhall Street and the Geo. Soc.—there was as much difference as between the successive husbands of the beauteous Majesty of Denmark. Even Mary Egerton, though so fond of Hurley, because it was home, because three of the five doors visible in the ugly wainscoted lobby of the first floor led to rooms that still bore the names of John, Julius, and Harry, though their shutters were now rarely unclosed, could not help experiencing a feeling of relief on emerging from the formal gravel-walk of the Hurley Garden into the cheerful, well-planted grounds of Eastwick Lodge.

"So Miss Spry is staying with you again!" exclaimed Georgiana to her friend, as soon as they had fully discussed their progress in the books they were reading, and the tapestry they were stitching.

"Again?—Aunt Rachel has not been with us since Christmas."

"Indeed! I thought it was later. But she must have so much on her hands at home, that I wonder she ever finds time to leave Helstone."

"Now my brother has settled there he does all in his power to release her."

"Yes, I can understand that," replied Georgiana, with a smile.

"Poor woman! her early days were so devoted to duties of one kind or other, that at her period of life it is high time she should enjoy a little relaxation."

"I should have fancied her happier at Helstone than any where else."

"So long as she has the society of Julius. But my poor grandfather is no companion. All he cares for is having the newspapers read and explained to him."

"Were *I* his daughter, I should make it a point of conscience to stay at home to read and explain them. Consider how far more important the calls Mr. Egerton has upon his time!"—observed Miss Heseltine.

"Certainly;—the whole business of the parish, which is considerable. But Julius has so much consideration for poor aunt Rachel"——

"That he is delighted to procure her the respite of a month's visit to Hurley," interrupted Georgiana, with a smile.

"A month! *Is* she going to spend a month with us?" cried Mary. "Mamma will be *so* pleased, she was afraid it would be only a week or two."

"She *always* stays a month," cried Georgiana, pettishly; "*comes* for a week or two, but never stays less than a month. I recollect last Christmas"——

But Miss Heseltine's reminiscences were cut short as she advanced towards the house by the sight of their object, in proper person, standing at the hall-door; and dreading that Miss Rachel might force her way into the Captain's study, she hurried the steps of her companion, and followed her closely into the drawing-room.

"Mercy me, my dear Miss Georgy, what an atmosphere?" cried aunt Rachel, in a familiar tone, untying her bonnet, and loosening her white cravat, after returning the greetings of the young hostess. "The windows all wide open at noonday in the month of June! I *am* quite amazed, my dear, that a well-read and travelled gentleman like your papa should sanction any thing so preposterous!—What is the practice, pray, of the inhabitants of southern countries? Why, to shut out all contact with the external atmosphere—to close the windows, lest hot air should penetrate into the rooms—and to close the shutters, lest the sun should reach the windows. I will just step in and speak to Captain Heseltine on the subject, for it is most unwholesome for a person of your tender years to be stifled in a room so hot as this."

"My father is too busy to see you," said Georgiana, firmly, "and I am too much accustomed to air to support a closer atmosphere."

"Never too late to amend a bad habit, my dear ma'am,"—cried aunt Rachel, "You are positively losing all your fine bloom;—isn't she, Mary?"

"Mr. Mitford and I were agreeing last night, that we never saw Georgiana looking better," replied Mary Egerton; and aunt Rachel's petulant rejoinder of "Stuff!—Nonsense!" was provoked not only by so bold a difference of opinion, but by her niece's

lly in serving with the young heiress, by a quotation of his

praises, the cause of Philip Mitford, who was supposed in the neighbourhood to be a pretender to her smiles.

"Since you find the weather so oppressive, I wonder you ventured to the Wells till the cool of the evening," observed Georgiana.

"I had business there, ma'am," said Miss Rachel, snappishly. "Mary, my dear, why didn't you tell me that the Holwells had taken Hammond's House?"

"Who are the Holwells, and where is Hammond's house, my dear Mary?" inquired Georgiana Heseltine, coming to her friend's assistance.

"The large white house on Mount Ephraim. I was not aware that it was taken."

"For the whole season!—and of all people in the world, by the Holwells!" cried Miss Rachel.

"Do we know them?" inquired Mary, calmly.

"Know them! what has *that* to do with it? Lord Holwell is own brother to Lady Tiverton!"

"I did not know there *was* a Lord Holwell," observed Georgiana, boldly hazarding the disgust of her future mother-in-law. "I remember we had once a housekeeper of that name, who was famous for"——

"*A housekeeper!*" ejaculated Miss Rachel, with a look of indescribable compassion. "I am alluding, ma'am, to John Adolphus Wintham, fourth Viscount Holwell, son of James, third Viscount, by Lady Dorothea, second daughter to the Marquis of Headingham,"—(vide Debrett, page 384.)

"Of none of whom, as I said before, did I ever happen to hear in my life," observed Georgiana, coolly.

"But you have a Peerage, ma'am, I suppose, in the house?"

"Perhaps so (for there are two bookcases yonder full of fine-bound books bought with them of Mr. Doubledo's assignees), but I never opened one of them."

Miss Rachel shrugged her shoulders, and with the distinct enunciation with which she was in the habit of reciting such matters to the deaf old doctor, resumed—"John Adolphus, fourth Viscount, left, by the Lady Dorothea, his wife, two sons and five daughters; of whom the Honourable Ismena, the eldest, intermarried with Richard James, seventh Earl of Tiverton; Henrietta, the second"——

"In short," interrupted Georgiana, not desirous of going through the pedigree, "the man who has taken Hammond's for the summer is brother to the fine lady sister-in-law of Mr. and Mrs. Egerton; whom, if he happen to resemble, the society of Tunbridge will gain very little by his visit."

"The Countess of Tiverton is a woman of high birth and breeding, ma'am: some people are fond of designating such qualities by the name of fine ladyism," said Miss Rachel, drawin'

up with indignation ; " I trust *my niece* has been better instructed ; and that she is aware of the advantage likely to accrue to her brothers from cultivating, with due respect, the acquaintance of Lord and Lady Holwell."

" Surely, my dear aunt, that will depend upon themselves rather than upon *us* ? "

" Such things depend upon any body who chooses to manage them properly. Not that I can compliment your father and mother upon much skill in such matters. Lord and Lady Holwell have been at Hammond's this week past, yet they had not the wit to find it out."

" We must do Mrs. Egerton the justice to admit that she is neither a gossip nor a toady," said Georgiana, in a tone that called forth a glance of remonstrance from Mary.

" She might have made the discovery of their arrival in the same simple manner that it occurred to me, ma'am. Coming round the corner, by the Kentish Hotel (adding up in my mind the bill I had just paid at the haberdasher's), I was nearly run over by a handsome family coach, from the windows of which, as an involuntary exclamation escaped me, half-a-dozen heads were suddenly thrust out. I was about to remonstrate with the coachman on his carelessness, when, by the respectability of his wig, I perceived that he belonged to no ordinary family ; and you may guess what was my emotion on discerning upon the rail a hand grenade surmounted by a viscount's coronet, and recognizing in a moment the armorial bearings of my Lord Holwell, a near connection of my own brother-in-law,—(vide page 764 of the arms, in Debrett.)"

" Did you stop and explain it to the coachman ? " inquired Georgiana, provokingly.

" No, ma'am—I did not ; but I stopped and said to myself, what a stroke of good fortune for the family at Hurley House !—Lord Holwell's visit to Tunbridge Wells will perhaps be the making of my poor, dear Julius ! "

" After commencing with nearly running over his aunt ! " cried Georgiana, laughing. " But I suppose *il n'y a que le premier pas qui coûte*."

" I do not see how either the first or last step is likely to benefit my brothers," said Mary.

" Not by introducing them to the notice of their uncle through the medium of Lord Holwell ? " cried aunt Rachel, pettishly.

" Their own merit seems to be getting them on very well in the world without their uncle's assistance," observed Georgiana Heseltine.

" And, after all, through what medium are they to be introduced to the notice of Lord Holwell ? " added Mary.

" Your father and mother will of course call upon Lord Holwell."

" I am sure I hope not," cried Mary. " Our living at Hurley

House and his lodging at Hammond's is surely no reason for intruding upon his acquaintance?"

"On seeing their cards," continued aunt Rachel, taking off her spectacles and sedulously wiping them as a pretext for not hearing her niece's interruption, "his lordship will naturally exclaim, 'Who are this Mr. and Mrs. Egerton?' Every body hereabouts will answer, 'The *Honourable* Mr. and Mrs. Egerton of Hurley House, and one of the most respectable families in the environs of Tunbridge Wells.' 'Relations, I make no doubt, of my brother-in-law, Lord Tiverton,' will infallibly be his lordship's comment. Next day, the visit will be returned—an acquaintance will commence—an intimacy ensue. If the Holwells have brought down their cook, they will probably invite you to dinner; if not (as I saw children in the carriage, and your strawberry-beds are just now in their prime), you can invite the family to a rural tea. Thenceforward, you will all be on the happiest footing at Tiverton Castle."

"All this is very plausibly settled, my dear aunt," said Mary, trembling at the idea of the advances Miss Rachel was about to suggest to her father and mother—"but"—

"There is no *but* in the case," angrily interrupted aunt Rachel.

"*But* it is surely somewhat humiliating that Mr. Julius Egerton's chance of preferment should rest upon the arrival of Lord Holwell's cook and the ripeness of the Hurley strawberries," persisted Miss Heseltine, nothing daunted by the dictatorial tone of her guest.

"Trifles capable of being turned to high account are never trifling, ma'am, in the estimation of great minds," said Miss Rachel, swelling with indignation. "My nephew is destined to be an ornament to the country, provided we can insure a foundation for the pedestal from which he is to command attention."

"I can scarcely fancy a strawberry-bed a very steady foundation!" exclaimed the provoking Georgiana.

"Ah, my dear Sir!—how truly gratified I am in the opportunity of making my personal inquiries after your health," cried Miss Rachel, turning suddenly towards the door, through the narrowest possible aperture of which the flowered chintz wrapper of Captain Heseltine was perceptible. "Step in, step in—there are none here but friends, who will shew every indulgence towards your dishabille. Step in, my dear Sir, step in!"

And the body of the reluctant victim was accordingly dragged forwards, his mind being still pinned down to his library table by the paper weight of a ponderous quarto volume of *Geographical Transactions*.

"Pray be seated, ma'am. I fear you have had a dusty walk," said Captain Heseltine, scarcely recognising Mary or her aunt, so absorbed were his thoughts in his morning's studies.

"Dusty!" reiterated the astonished Miss Rachel, who feared

that the word might be intended to convey a reflection upon her muddy clogs.

"We are sadly in want of rain," persisted the absent old gentleman, in a querulous tone. "I was reading last night, in Lander's Journal, that there was not the slightest accession of moisture between the 7th of April and the 4th of September!—*Five Months drought*—all the brooks dried up—the maize crops lost—the earth parched in a most terrific degree, and even the camels on the point of perishing!"

"Luckily we live in a more auspicious climate," said Georgiana, too much accustomed to her father's vagaries to blush for his seeming absurdity. "Even here, however, there were great complaints until within the last few days. The thunder storm of yesterday was said to be a great benefit."

"Benefit, my dear!" faltered her father, looking surprised in his turn.

"So I heard, papa, from the gardeners," replied Georgiana.

"The gardeners, my dear!—what should they know about it?—It is a long-established opinion in the Himalâ, that a thunder storm in August is the precursor of the jungle fever."

"The air appears very much cleared this morning," persisted Miss Heseltine.

"You are mistaken, my love. The air is full of imperceptible animalculæ, which are invariably put in motion by a storm. It was observed by Humboldt in his first expedition."

"My dear Captain Heseltine!—Surely you have ceased to pin your faith upon *Humboldt*?"—cried Miss Rachel, drawing closer to her victim, and fixing her amber spectacles upon his face, as if for the purpose of fascination. "Reflect how completely he has been confuted by subsequent travellers!—Prince Maximilian of Wied, Ward, Brand, Head, &c. &c. &c. &c., have successively overthrown his theories and invalidated his facts!"

To the great annoyance of Miss Heseltine and mortification of Mary, reply now produced rejoinder, and rejoinder remonstrance; and the argument was not only prolonged for nearly an hour between the bewildered Captain and his guest, but ended in an invitation to dinner for the following day, with a view to its renewal.

But Mary Egerton had other vexations in store. For ten days following Miss Rachel's unlucky discovery of Lord Holwell's arrival at the Wells, she was kept in a constant state of alarm by her aunt's officious overtures of civility to every member of the family at Hammond's. Her Sunday devotions were interrupted by aunt Rachel's assiduous loan of psalm-books to the junior branches of the family, passing them over from pew to pew, half across the chapel. The good lady extended her attentions even to the Danish coach-dog, by stopping the well-wigged family coachman, and entreating "that a muzzle might be bought for

that noble-looking animal; as, in consequence of the increase of hydrophobia in the county, poisoned meat was thrown about by order of the magistrates." While, apparently attacking the outposts, Miss Rachel was bent upon gradually carrying the war into the heart of the family.

At length an opening presented itself, such as many a pushing person has made available. Lord and Lady Holwell were visiting Tunbridge for the benefit of a sickly child—like most sickly children, its mother's idol; and by dint of noticing the poor little creature as it was drawn along the road to the Wells, and suggesting old-fashioned remedies to the head nurse, she achieved her grand object of being personally thanked by the Viscountess; and entering into particulars, in return, which served to explain that "she was on a visit to her brother-in-law, Mr. Egerton of Hurley House, the brother-in-law of Lord Holwell's sister, Lady Tiverton."

The explanation would have passed unnoticed by Lady Holwell, who was a cold, dry valetudinarian, caring for no brothers-in-law of her own or other people, and just then absorbed by the sufferings of her infirm child; but in the midst of Miss Rachel's chattering, Lord Holwell chanced to make his appearance, who, being a jovial fellow, and sick at soul of the dulness of Tunbridge, was heartily glad of a discovery that promised to enlarge his acquaintance, and vary the monotony of his invalidery. Nay, upon Miss Rachel's earnest invitation, he accompanied her straightway back to Hurley House; and she had actually the triumph of doing the honours of a real viscount to the astonished Mr. and Mrs. Egerton, and the discomfited Mary.

There was nothing, however, in Lord Holwell's deportment to create a suspicion that he resented the uncereemonious proceedings of the gaunt lady in the nankeen pelisse. On the contrary, he was evidently delighted to find in a near connexion of his family a good-humoured, companionable man, like William Egerton; and congratulated himself so cordially on the providential discovery, that the family was soon reconciled to his intrusion.

After bespeaking the acquaintance of Mrs. Egerton and Mary for his wife and daughters, he won the heart of poor William by pottering with him over his hay-fields, and persuading him to saunter in return half-way back from Hurley to Mount Ephraim.

"A very agreeable, gentlemanly man," was Egerton's remark as he re-entered the drawing-room; "I dare say he will prove an acquisition to us. My father and mother used to speak of the Holwells as a united, amiable family. My father and mother never could bear the present Lady Tiverton, but they did justice to her brother."

"Yes, yes, a most united family: that is exactly the reputation the Holwells bear at the Wells," cried Miss Rachel, in high spirits at the accomplishment of her object. "Always seen together."

riding, driving, walking, visiting, at church, and every where else. The first moment I caught sight of the family coach, crowded with little heads, I saw the sort of people we had to deal with ; and my presentiments seldom deceive me. Mrs. Smith, the haberdasher, tells me they ordered five straw bonnets of her, all of a pattern, and the two elder Miss Flinthams actually gave up gowns they had chosen at Gingham's, because there was not enough in the piece for the two younger. It is quite refreshing, in these times, to see so united a family ; the parents giving the example, and the young people brought up to follow it ! ”

Mary Egerton heaved an involuntary sigh at the idea of such happy family union. She had always so longed for a sister !—for though during the last five years Georgy Heseltine and herself had met daily, cherishing an affection as nearly as possible akin to sisterhood, there were the claims of their several families to keep them apart on many occasions when they would fain have been together.

“ I have promised Lord Holwell, my dear, that we will take a family dinner with him, without ceremony, on Saturday,” said William Egerton, addressing his wife. “ I trust, my love, you will make no objection ; her ladyship is prevented from formal visiting by her attendance on her sick child.”

“ On such grounds, my dear Livy, I think you may fairly dispense with an introductory visit,” observed aunt Rachel, fancying that Mrs. Egerton was waiting for her sanction. “ Who knows, my dear, in what all this may end ! ‘ Every road leads to Rome ! ’ quoth the proverb. You may find your way into Tiverton Castle by way of Mount Ephraim after all.”

CHAPTER III.

LORD HOLWELL.

It might have been supposed that Lord Holwell was not only aware of the circumstances which rendered his acquaintance peculiarly desirable to the Hurley family ; but that he was bent upon favouring their views. A week or two after the family dinner party which served to break the ice between all parties, an expedition to Battle Abbey having been proposed by the Viscount to William Egerton, aunt Rachel did not fail to interfere with pressing offers of the hospitalities of Helstone Parsonage, which was only five miles distant from the spot.

Lord Holwell, who, like most men settled with their family at a watering-place, grasped eagerly at any hope of change, immediately agreed to take an early dinner with the son of his new friends ; and finally (after a formal invitation from Julius per

medium of aunt Rachel) it was agreed that they should dine and sleep at the Parsonage, and return to Tunbridge on the following day.

Georgiana Heseltine, a little jealous perhaps of the claims thus quickly established by the people at Hammond's House upon the time and attention of Mary and her mother, could not forbear silently remarking that it was a strange thing the head of so "united a family" as the Holwells should, on so slight an inducement, absent himself from a sick child and sorrowing wife; but Mary, who was becoming familiarized with the oddities of her new friends, saw nothing to wonder at in the matter. Admitted behind the curtain of the "united family," dissonances had become apparent, imperceptible to remote observers.

There could scarcely have been found a more incongruous couple than Lord and Lady Holwell;—resembling each other only in being good kind of people, meaning no harm to their neighbours or each other. It was surprising with how much mutual goodwill they contrived to render each other uncomfortable; her ladyship (a feeble hypochondriac, dreading noise or business, starting at straws, and never so happy as when extended on a sofa in her dressing-room, within view of a comfortable medicine chest and a shelf covered with strange-looking vials of all sorts and conditions of nastiness from the apothecary's), had been adored into giving her hand to a noisy Irish foxhunter; to clear off the mortgages on whose Connaught estates the dowry of the Bristol heiress was extremely convenient. But although, from first to last, what is called exceedingly attached to each other, their union necessitated a constant succession of sacrifices, rendering their lives a state of martyrdom.

Lord Holwell was bred in all the sporting habits of a country gentleman; Lady Holwell liked nothing but the life of an invalid town lady. When condemned to take a house in London (for the benefit of approximation to the College of Physicians and Apothecaries' Hall) Lord Holwell preferred a central situation; Lady Holwell some no-thoroughfare out-of-the-way corner, like Tenterden Street or Spring Gardens. Lord Holwell insisted upon airy rooms; Lady Holwell on an apartment whence every breath was excluded. Lord Holwell, of a sanguine temperament, chose light clothing, light wines, light food; Lady Holwell was always covered with furs and cashmeres, and drank nothing but Madeira. Lord Holwell was a Tory, Lady Holwell a Whig; Lord Holwell loved travelling, Lady Holwell staying at home; Lord Holwell new acquaintance, Lady Holwell scarcely even old; Lord Holwell indulged his daughters, Lady Holwell spoiled her sons; and, to crown all, Lady Holwell delighted in the humdrum creepinously life of Tunbridge Wells, while his lordship made no secret of the fact, that he should chalk out the three months spent on Mount Ephraim as so much lost of his life!

The Misses and Masters Flintham, meanwhile, shared amongst them, like other broods, the qualities of sire and dam; but each had some distinguishing peculiarity, rendering the pretension of being the most "united family" in the world exceedingly problematical. Had they not been in the main good-tempered, no single roof could have contained their prodigious discrepancies of taste.

Maria, the eldest, was of a philosophical turn of mind, deeply read in Mrs. Marcet's Conversations, but without a word to say for herself. Harriet, the second, was as devoted to the pleasures of the imagination as her sister to the cultivation of the positive sciences. Emma, the third, was a classic;—and little Matilda, the youngest, a budding saint. Jane was a frantic musician; Emma, Maria, and Matilda, shuddered when they saw her approach the instrument. Jane was passionately fond of dancing, while Matilda thought it a sin, Maria a degradation, and Harriet a bore.

Nor were the sons of the united family much more uniform in their fancies. John Flintham, the eldest, was a prosier of prose, a dull, learned ass; while James and Richard, the two younger boys, were clever scapegraces.

To amalgamate with this heterogeneous group was no easy matter for such straightforward folks as the Egertons of Hurley House. During the initiatory family dinner-party, Mary had for a moment imagined that a mystification was being played off at the expense of her parents' rusticity. But on their return home, aunt Rachel assured her that, in the Holwells' class of life, it was no uncommon thing when the lady ordered the windows to be closed for the lord to order the doors to be opened; or for one sister to call music trash, because the other termed field-preaching a breach of the peace.

Aunt Rachel was in all cases fond of setting herself up as an expounder of the manners of the great. The defunct Mrs. Spry had, during her ten years of governesshood in the family of the Duke of Pelham, been occasionally permitted to make tea for lords and ladies, and to catch a glimpse through the door of the saloon, of the Prince of Wales, Sheridan, and Charles Fox; and accustomed herself ever afterwards to talk of them as her familiar associates; till Miss Rachel, who followed her mother's footsteps in every particular, came to believe that it was *she* who had witnessed the incidents recorded in her mother's legendary anecdotes. She had been detected by her nephews in commencing a story, "At the time I lived so much with the Prince" (whom she never saw in her life), precisely in the dry, consequential tone of the ex-governess.

Not all her notes explanatory, however, availed to convince Mary Egerton that the Holwells and their daughters were not eccentric people, and it was always a relief to her to get back from Hammond's to the humdrum tranquillity of Hurley, or the cheerful conversation of Georgiana Heseltine.

"Do you know, I am quite fidgety at the idea of this visit of Lord Holwell to Helstone," said she to her young friend, on the day of her father's and the Viscount's departure for Battle Abbey. "Although aunt Rachel has returned home these two days to prepare for them, I fear they will put Julius sadly out of his way."

"Is that all? It does young men good to be put out of their way! Your brother is scarcely old enough to pretend to the privileges of an old bachelor."

"Lord Holwell will find things at the parsonage so different from all he is accustomed to!"

"Then why does he go? He sleeps there for his own convenience."

"Julius sent the invitation at my father's express desire and assurance that it had been already made in my grandfather's name by aunt Rachel."

"I own I was rather surprised to hear of his civility; for between ourselves, my dear Mary, your brother passes in the neighbourhood of Helstone for a sort of hermit. He refuses all invitations, pays no visits, and devotes his days to village-visiting, and his nights to study. The gloss of his japan, as Philip Mitford says, is still strong upon him."

"May it never be worn off!" said Mary gravely.

You do not surely wish him to become an enthusiast?"

In his profession, better be an enthusiast than cold or lukewarm."

"Better be a reasonable being than any thing else," persisted Gergiana. "I hate to hear of any friend of mine pretending to extraordinary virtues. Mr. Egerton might have returned the visit of Sir Thomas Smyth, or even have dined at Battle Abbey, without prejudice to his zeal for converting the old women of his parish. For my part, I am apt to reverse the popular proverb, and say, 'The greater the saint the greater the sinner.'"

"To fear that *Julius* will ever accredit your theory," cried Mary; "Your prejudice in favour of my eldest brother is too apt to blind you to his merits. Julius may not be so amusing as John. He cannot sing—he cannot act—he cannot make the agreeable;—but he has more valuable qualities than any of us, and will live to be an honour to the family."

The visit thus critically discussed between the two young ladies, was in fact a source of sad annoyance to Julius. Aunt Rachel's departure to Hurley had afforded a pledge for at least a month's peace and independence at home; and now it was to be broken in upon by the intrusion of a stranger, who was to be made much of merely because he was a lord, and connected by marriage with a most ungracious uncle! Julius Egerton had no patience to dwell upon his disappointment; and after ordering the state bedroom of the parsonage to be got ready (the very bedroom in which his grandfather the Earl had slept when he came down to

instal his two sons in pupilage at Helstone), he turned anew to his Greek Testament for consolation, and lost the recollection of his miseries.

Julius Egerton had now been more than a year in orders, pursuing his vocation at Helstone with all the ardour of a novice. Yet a blessing seemed to be upon his labours. Stubborn hearts were softened by the eloquence and unction of his preaching—miserable homes redeemed from wretchedness by the influence of his benevolence. His manner was so persuasive, his countenance so noble, his figure so commanding, that “Truths divine came mended from his tongue.” The intelligence of a strong mind and the artlessness of a virtuous heart, gave peculiar force to his exposition of the doctrines of the established church.

Although the panegyrics of such a *proneuse* as Rachel Spry were a serious disadvantage, the fame of the “St. John of Helstone” was spreading widely in the county. Every neighbourhood has its great house; and though the great house called Helstone Park was far from a distinguished one, yet wherever an establishment of a certain magnitude is set up, eminent persons will be found to eat venison off its service of plate, as if to verify the proverb, that fools make feasts, and wise men eat them. Among the guests assembled by Sir Thomas and Lady Smyth, more than one man of renown had sat in their gorgeous pew in the chancel of Helstone Church (conceded by the toadyism of Dr. Spry), and done justice to the talents of the officiating minister. But when, at length, the mighty Silas Vivian, the executioner of so many literary and professional reputations, came to be numbered among their guests, and was cross-examined in his opinions of the young St. John, he was heard, after expressing the highest compliments, to mutter that Mr. Egerton appeared to be incited by some stirring consciousness or reminiscence—that he preached like a man under unnatural excitement.

“There certainly is something rather odd about him,” replied Lady Smyth. “We have thought it right to notice Mr. Egerton on many occasions since we settled at Helstone; nay, Sir Thomas, feeling that some attention was due from a man of his landed property in the county to a clergyman of the established church, actually went so far as to call upon him and invite him to dinner. But the invitation was declined, on the plea that, in addition to his professional duties, he was obliged to devote his time to his grandfather, Dr. Spry—a sort of superannuated schoolmaster, beneficed by the parents of one of his pupils. We considered this, at the time, far from respectful; but, as you say, the young man appears to be a little cracked.”

“I said nothing of the kind, madam, that I remember,” interposed Mr. Vivian. “I merely observed that Mr. Egerton appeared to be acting under some peculiar bent or impulse.”

“The impulse of being vastly uncivil!” cried Lady Smyth,

whose sagacity was of the smallest. "I recollect one day meeting him on the road, as we were riding with a large party of persons of fashion (Sir John and Lady Greenfinch, and our relations, Lord and Lady Macnamara), and when Sir Thomas (instead of passing him by, as it would have been very easy to do) stopped his horse and asked him why we saw so little of him at the Park, in the most affable manner, the young gentleman made some sort of short answer, very far from becoming the curate of Dr. Spry."

"Your ladyship has certainly every right to resent such ingratitude," replied Vivian, with a sneer—diverted at the idea of the rebuff given to the impertinent patronage of the Smyths, and confirmed in his opinion that the eloquence of the curate arose from no ordinary source of inspiration.

The nice observer was not deceived. Young Egerton's was a mind at war within itself. In the utmost of its strength there was weakness, as in the strength of all mortal natures; and it was against an overweening consciousness of this that the aspirant after perfection struggled. He knew himself vain—he knew himself ambitious—he knew himself even *interested*;—for how can those remain *disinterested* who cherish a lawless coveting of the vanities of the world? His visits to Tiverton Castle had inspired secret disgust towards the homeliness of his father's house. Even as a boy, the rude simplicity of Hurley had been distasteful; and when his father's plan for his entering the church, with a promise of preferment from the Duke of Pelham, and a hope of patronage from Lord Tiverton, was disclosed to him, Julius had accepted the proposition on the mere temptation of worldly advancement. He was aware that his inclinations pointed towards other modes of life; but he shuddered at the idea of an attorney's office, the alternative suggested by his father.

At college, his distinctions of mind and manners had introduced Julius Egerton to the society of his superiors in rank and fortune, by whose influence his craving after greatness was fostered. Insensibly, his habits became tinged with extravagance; and, though the limited allowance his father was able to afford him placed some check upon his follies, the son of the "Honourable Mr. Egerton" found little difficulty in obtaining credit; till, on quitting the University, Julius found himself encumbered with debts, the trifling amount of which would have formed a famous jest for Lord Storby, or any other of his fashionable associates; but which to poor Julius, the second son of Hurley House, sounded like a decree of bankruptcy. He recoiled from the idea of encumbering the narrow income of his parents. Reared in frugal self-denial, he held in the utmost respect the honest prudence of his family; and to brave his father's mortification, by confessing into what excesses he had allowed himself to be betrayed, was an effort beyond his courage. Instead of relieving the difficulties of Mr. and Mrs. Egerton, who had relinquished many of their little com-

forts to allow him a college education, he was about to encroach upon the rights of his brother and sister, and make it clear that he—Julius—who had been always quoted as the steadiest of Mr. Egerton's sons, was the first to inconvenience his family.

Such was the motive which had driven Julius into the church. The young men with whom he associated at Trinity were chiefly noblemen's sons, about to launch into a life of pleasure, or to rush into a life of distinction by filling some family seat in parliament ; and prompted by their flatteries, persuasions, and promises of assistance, young Egerton at one moment resolved to declare his aversion to the profession selected for him, and his incompetency for its duties. But, lo ! just as the period approached for taking his degree, when on the point of appealing to his father's indulgence, his creditors became so clamorous that it was impossible to postpone further the settlement of their claims. To acquaint his worthy parents at the same moment of his prodigality, and his determination to renounce the provision awaiting him, was impossible. Aunt Rachel, therefore, became his confidante and banker, with a mutual agreement that his misdoings should be kept secret from his family, and the sum of three hundred pounds advanced, gradually repaid to his grandfather's strong-box when he should be salaried as curate of Helstone. All that remained was to read assiduously for his degree ; in order that he might be able to preach, marry, christen, and bury, with becoming zeal, for the reimbursement of his unconscious creditor.

Like many other people, in short, Julius was made to atone by the commission of a thousand meannesses for having for a moment pretended to indulgences lawfully beyond his reach. But this was wormwood to his generous spirit. The more he reflected on the sacred engagements into the outrage of which he was hurried by his bitterly repented transgressions, the more he loathed and despised the dissimulation into which he had betrayed himself.

"All self-sacrifices for the lucre of gain are vile," mused Julius, while engaged in the solemn studies indispensable to the accomplishment of his object. "How often have I exclaimed against fellows for marrying ugly heiresses or rich widows, or paying their court to opulent old gentlemen on the look-out for an heir ! But what was *their* baseness compared with mine ! To sell my opinions, my conscience, my self-respect—to make a bargain of my piety—how base—how despicable !"

Nevertheless, he felt that it must be done : that he had incurred obligations as sacred as the maintenance of his own moral integrity ; and, after many unsuspected struggles and much unrevealed anguish, Julius became curate of Helstone, and a miserable man.

For he had taken up his cross in earnest. From the moment of pledging his word to the serviceable woman who had preserved her favourite nephew from the reprobation of his family, Julius renounced the society of his gay companions, the allurements of

elegant literature, and laboured without ceasing to subdue his vain-glorious aspirations. Since his fate was sealed, he determined to become the most exemplary of parish priests (whatever he did must always be in the superlative), and devote himself to the service of the altar, as if to atone, by excess of zeal, for the fault he had committed in accepting it as an hireling.

By much effort, he succeeded in detaching his thoughts from the frivolities of life. Aware that abstinence is easier than temperance, he renounced, on pretext of the old rector's infirmities, all intercourse with society. Even with the family at Hurley he refrained from intimate communication. He felt the insufficiency of his vocation; he felt the difficulty of devoting his thoughts to things eternal with the exclusiveness which the conscientious fervour of youth pointed out as the one thing needful. But, by degrees, this unnatural coercion of a comprehensive mind recoiled upon itself. He became an enthusiast. He preached (as Mr. Vivian described him) as if under the influence of unnatural excitement; and the consequence was that he begat enthusiasm, and became the origin of unnatural excitement in others, the apostle of the poor, the idol of all. He had found it necessary to work himself up to so high a pitch of sanctification—to attempt so much in order to achieve a little—that it was no wonder poor William Egerton was beginning to stand a little in awe of the wonderful chick which had been fledged under his paternal wing. He even felt it necessary to prepare Lord Holwell's mind for the seriousness of the youthful host who was about to do the honours of Helstone Parsonage.

"What the deuce!—you don't mean that a son of yours and a nephew of Tiverton's has turned Methodist?"—cried Lord Holwell, instantly conjuring up the idea of a field-preacher with lanky locks and a rusty suit of solemn black.

"A Methodist?—God forbid!" exclaimed Egerton, who from his alliance with the established church had imbibed a becoming fervour of orthodoxy. "I never heard the slightest objection raised against the doctrines of my son; on the contrary, his visitation sermon last Easter was pronounced by the bishop to be the finest ever heard in his diocese. I only meant that Julius, being grave beyond his years, might perhaps"—

"Pho, pho, pho!—When young men affect gravity beyond their years, it is the fault of those they live amongst. This poor lad of yours, cooped up with a tabby of an aunt and a grandfather in his dotage, don't know what's what. We'll have a jollification to-night, and rouse the youngster up."

Egerton shook his head, and looked nervous.

"Fathers and mothers are the last people in the world to manage such matters," persisted Lord Holwell. "'Pon my life, the saints are gaining ground so cursedly in England, that one is afraid of finding them spreading their lines on ground of one's own."

And Lord Holwell, whose notions of a meritorious country clergyman were chiefly founded upon the example of his cousin, Parson Flintham, his nearest neighbour on his Irish estates, and one of the jolliest dogs in the county, launched forth into a diatribe against dissenters and the righteous over-much, which, though it did not even remotely reach the case of Julius Egerton, his father earnestly trusted that it might not be renewed in his presence. He foresaw the rebuke with which the high-minded young man would be likely to fling back the scorn of the scorner.

His alarm, however, was premature. Lord Holwell had not been a quarter of an hour in company with the curate of Helstone, before he felt that it would be as impossible to bandy words with him on professional subjects, as to dispute with the king on his prerogative. Young as he was, the grave good breeding of Julius's manners inspired respect: and so far from justifying Lord Holwell's expectations, that he would render his visit disagreeable by sanctimoniousness, he seemed to take pleasure in doing, as a man of the world, the honours of the little old-fashioned Parsonage, which the moderateness of the living had never permitted the incumbents to ruin by improvement.

The trimly neatness of the place was a refreshing sight to the eyes of an habitual resident in Ireland. The old brickwork porch, covered with passion-flowers and jessamine, under whose leafy shade George Herbert might have concocted his Priest of the Temple, was in exquisite keeping with the holy and tranquil spot. Even aunt Rachel, when seated at the head of a well-spread board, was very different from the prating, gossiping Miss Spry, who had intruded into Hammond's House; and the old Doctor, to whom the idea of having a lord in the house acted as a restorative, managed to say a few intelligible words of civility before he was wheeled off to bed.

Instead of spending the evening in either controversy or raillery (according to his custom with Parson Flintham), Lord Holwell found himself strongly interested in Julius's explanations of the various points of scenery he had that morning visited. Collections of engravings and historical works connected with the antiquities of Sussex were brought from the library for his entertainment; and the usual country-gentleman topics of agriculture, poor-laws, and parochial administration, were good-humouredly discussed.

"I spent a very pleasant day last week with your nephew, young Egerton, at his Parsonage," formed a paragraph in Lord Holwell's next letter to his brother-in-law at Tiverton Castle. "He is a monstrous fine young fellow; neither a pedant nor a Methodist, though I find he distinguished himself at college, and is made a sort of prophet in the neighbourhood. I should be vexed that either Peter or Robert (whom I begged you to remember when you had a living to give away) stood in his light. As I

informed you in my last, your brother and his family are vastly attentive to us all ; I am only vexed that you did not favour me with an introduction to them when I mentioned that Halford had ordered us to Tunbridge Wells."

The notice bestowed by Lord Tiverton upon his brother-in-law's letter, consisted in handing it across the breakfast-table to the Countess, who marked *her* contempt by a pitying shrug of the shoulders. Since her accession of importance in the fashionable world, Lady Tiverton had, as far as possible, dropped the acquaintance of her Irish relations. Even her brother, Lord Holwell, was at times felt to be an encumbrance. There was a vulgar domesticity about him, a family-coach sort of way of going on, which often made him inconvenient and ridiculous. She had no reliance upon his judgment. At a place like Tunbridge Wells he was sure to pick up some tiger or other. "No one but Holwell, however, would have shewn so little tact as to volunteer an acquaintance with such people as the Sprys ; and it was quite absurd to fancy that, because he found it convenient to sleep in a parsonage-house instead of an inn, Lord Tiverton's hands were to be tied by promises of a living to his host."

The Earl, as was his wont, instantly coincided in her ladyship's view of the case. He had, in fact, no time to disagree with her. Between parliamentary business and private business, every hour of his day was bespoken. One-half his life having been spent in getting into difficulties, the other half was to be spent in getting out of them. He had always three or four lawsuits going on, and six or eight lawyers to manage them ; and as Lady Tiverton chose that they should live to the full extent of their thirty thousand a-year, though nearly half their income was dissipated, nothing short of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, with a paper mint at his command, could possibly have cleared off their embarrassments.

Could the kind-hearted William Egerton have beheld his brother, now that he had served a seven years' apprenticeship to the craft of aristocratic life, he would have grieved to observe that the cheeks he had noticed as lank and yellow, were ten times more jaundiced than on his accession to rank and fortune. But in his own family, no one cared for his looks. Except when he was wanted to draw a cheque on the banker, Lady Tiverton seldom took the trouble of addressing a civil word to him : and as to his sons and daughters, they saw so little of him, except in company, that they held themselves excused from more than the ceremonial of filial respect.

Lord Egerton, indeed, had his independent domicile, and avoided, as far as possible, all intercourse with his family ; not from consciousness of their worthlessness, or love of independence, but because it was the habit of the set to which he devoted himself. Beyond the appearance of things Lord Egerton cared for nothing.

His narrow mind was so absorbed in the ambition of passing for the most correctly fashionable young man about town, that he did not permit himself to indulge in a single natural taste. His life was a life of self-denial. He would have died of hunger and thirst rather than eat or drink at some spot under the ban of the empire of fashion ; and condemned himself to a thousand pursuits extremely distasteful to him, because they were those of his gay associates. He was a timid, bad rider, yet he had eight hunters at Melton ; he detested music, yet had his stall at the opera ; he disliked crossing the sea, yet spent a fortnight every winter at Paris ; he abhorred cards, yet at the 'Travellers' never passed an evening without leaving a certain sum behind him at the whist-table.

"Egerton does a vast deal too much," was the remark of his uncle Adolphus, one day, to his favourite nephew. "A thousand things highly becoming in you or I are *infra dig.* in an eldest son. There is no occasion for Egerton to distinguish himself by playing fine. People will be always ready enough to make much of *him*, whether in or out of fashion. Nothing provokes me more than to see a man in his position affecting airs that are indispensable to a younger brother ; unless, indeed, to hear a fellow talking the same claptrap in the House of Lords he would in the Commons."

"I don't perceive that Egerton does any thing different from the rest of the world," replied Dick, taking his cigar from his mouth.

"The rest of the world, my dear fellow, is a generality that means nothing. The world is not such a handful as to be spoken of *en masse*. From the time of the serpent that tempted Eve every thing has had a head and a tail, and gets on by moving them in contrary directions. If *you* were not to winter in Leicestershire, or if *I* were not to be seen at whist in the course of the evening, people would ask what was become of us, and fancy we were hard up. But Egerton ought to be able to play or hunt, or let it alone, according to his whim or fancy."

"Not now—his day for that is over," said Dick, with a significant nod. "Privileges become obsolete, you know, for want of enforcement ; and the world having once found out that Egerton stands in awe of it—that he is not master of himself—that he is the slave of opinion—a slave he must remain. Not a fellow in the club but knows he can annoy Egerton to death by sneering at his new carriage, or inquiring, with a significant smile, the name of his tailor. As to that brute, Sir Gordon Hilfield, whom I have seen drive him out of his senses by asking an explanation of his good things, and listening with an incredulous look to his anecdotes, I call him Egerton's damper."

"Nobody's fault but his own—What business has he to say good things, or relate anecdotes ?—It is going beyond his line ; and Hilfield, who is nobody (a Guelphic knight, or some horror of that kind), is justified in resenting Egerton's encroachments upon his business. It is *his* duty to be agreeable ; and, of course, when the

heir of a rich peer interferes with Sir Gordon's vocation, he is asked to the dinners and country-houses in preference to a man who has nothing else to recommend him."

"You seem determined to reduce poor Egerton to a cipher!" cried Dick, amused by Adolphus Egerton's parliamentary manner of discussing trifles light as air. "I suspect it was by your advice he gave up his seat to me."

"Of course it was. Sore as I was upon the subject, I made it a point of conscience to suggest to *him* the line of conduct that Tiverton ought to have pursued in former days towards *me*. Family boroughs were intended for the protection of younger brothers. If a man be not able to provide suitably for his second son, he ought at least to secure him from the consequences of the debts which he has no choice but to contract."

"Certainly, certainly," replied Dick. "But, trust me, it was any thing but a point of conscience that made Egerton give up parliament. The atmosphere of the old House was fatal to a fellow's complexion, and, as my father was working his way to the marquissate, he made difficulties about slack attendance. So when Egerton found that it was a place of all-work, and that he should be quizzed to death by Hilfield or others if he consented to drudge, he proposed me to my father, and my father to the corporation, and there was an end to the business."

"Not quite an end, for I'm told you make a capital member," observed Adolphus, smiling upon his adopted heir. "Only that you would find it a deuce of a bore, I should be almost inclined to advise you to stick to politics. Politics are looking up, my dear fellow. During the war, they were at the devil of a discount. Just remember what fellows got on and made a noise! But now that government is the only balloon for a man to rise in, places get dear and the company select. There are two or three really gentlemanly men in the present ministry."

"I should not be satisfied with moderate success," observed Dick, filling the ashes of his cigar from his waistcoat. "It is true that, on the few occasions I have found it necessary to rise, I have carried away the House; which, considering that not one of the author members but has proved a failure, I am a little proud of. But what is the worth of a speech or two in a political life? To distinguish one's self as a public man, one must do nothing else; and, thank God, I still find attractions elsewhere that are worth all the cheers of the ministerial or opposition benches."

"You talk like a blockhead, my dear Dick," replied Adolphus, in his usual imperturbable tone. "The only good thing of public life is, that, like certain pieces of preferment, it can be held with something better."

"Ay, ay, the public life of a middle-aged man, whose place gives him plenty of patronage and whose pleasures plenty of pretenders

to it. But the politician, like the soldier, must work his way up; and I don't care to work."

"Who does? But make yourself easy. A single brilliant speech on a popular question will do your business. After that, keep as still as death for a session or two; then, make a wavering speech, as if exceedingly perplexed in your conscience whether or not to oppose the measures of government; and, take my word for it, you will have a private visit from the minister's private secretary before twenty-four hours are over your head!"

"Likely enough; but that system is thorough-blown; and, were I to take a part in public life, I should prefer one which might yield me some little credit. I am not yet in so desperate a plight as to make it necessary for me to dirty my fingers."

"The deuce you are not! Why, supposing Tiverton dies to-morrow, what becomes of you? Embarrassed as he is, you don't imagine he has laid any thing by for you or the girls?"

"But *why* suppose he will die to-morrow? He has as good a life as any one I know. And even were some accident to carry off the governor, be assured, Egerton would act otherwise towards me than he does now. It is *de mauvais ton* for two brothers about town to hang upon each other, or live in the same set; but it looks well for an Earl of Tiverton living at Tiverton Castle to be on the best terms with his younger brother."

"I suspect he would be on all the better terms with him for seeing him under-secretary, or a junior lord," observed Adolphus, with a knowing nod.

"No doubt—so would you. But, between ourselves, my dear Adolphus, your notions of getting on in political life are *rococo*. Let me alone. I neither expose my game nor publish my theory. Enough if I succeed."

"Enough, indeed! You talk exactly in the confident tone that Lady Tiverton used about bringing out Ismena. And look at the result! Lady Tiverton fancied that though other manoeuvring mammas failed in fastening their hooks, *her* quack system must be infallible. She quarrelled with all her friends who had daughters to marry, for fear they should analyse her nostrum; and was as mysterious even with *me*, as if there were a secret to keep. God bless the woman!—not one of her stratagems but was as familiar at the clubs as the incidents (warranted new) of every fresh melodrama brought by young authors to the manager of a theatre, *with*—'This scene, sir, would be most effective on the stage.'—'It was hissed, sir,' replies the manager, 'in the Freebooter of the Tyrol.'—'But the catastrophe, sir, the catastrophe!'—'Was damned two years ago in the Inn of Guadenzell.' But the young gentleman is incredulous, and chooses his production to be damned over again. So did Lady Tiverton."

"It *does* seem strange," observed Dick, betraying no emotion at these impertinent strictures on his mother, "that a beautiful girl

like Ismena should be out two seasons without one decided proposal."

"Not at all. I could have sworn it from the first," replied Adolphus. "Lady Tiverton's line of conduct was as erroneous as poor Egerton's. She had made up her plans before my brother came to his fortune, and was stupid enough to do for the daughter of the Countess of Tiverton all she had intended for the poor daughter of an embarrassed eldest son. With such a house and establishment as she now enjoys, she ought to have kept quite still; have suffered Ismena to have gone out as little as possible, and have let matters manage themselves. All the first men in town dine in St. James's Square. One of them would have fallen desperately in love with the beautiful Lady Ismena Egerton, of whom he had never heard till he saw her at her father's table; and nothing further would have been necessary than to buy the special licence and sign the settlements."

"Instead of which," cried Dick, "Lady Ismena Egerton has been puffed like one of Rowland's cosmetics, till people are sick of her very name!—Pictures in the Exhibition—prints in the annuals—verses in the papers—addresses in albums! Then such loads of finery from Paris;—as if it signified whether the handsomest girl in London had her bonnets made by Herbault or by some Mrs. Smith! Trinkets, lace, flowers, all the trappings of a superannuated coquette, have been heaped upon that girl."

"Poor Ismena has been ill-used," added Adolphus—"made ridiculous, and made unhappy. It is not *her* fault that her mother has chosen to hunt up the Duke of Ulster, and follow him from Rome to Paris, from Paris to London, from London to Ireland, like Goddard the thief-taker after some public defaulter."

"I told her from the first that she had no chance—Ulster being engaged to one of his cousins from the time he was at Eton. She wanted me to quarrel with Ulster—but I don't see on what grounds. He frequented the house at Rome, because she made it pleasant with balls and private theatricals; but the moment he found her ladyship's intentions serious, left the place, and has regularly ordered post-horses whenever Lady Tiverton made her appearance in the town where he was staying. Since *his* marriage, they have been playing the same game with two or three others, who fly before them just as people retreat from the cholera. I only hope she will not attempt the same system for Henrietta."

"Depend upon it she will not, because in *her* case a little finessing might not be amiss."

"Why in her case?"

"Because Lady Henrietta is not quite so well qualified to do honour to the Book of Beauty as her sister."

"I thought you had better taste," replied Dick, shrugging his shoulders. "Ismena is the showiest girl in London; but Henri-

etta is the prettiest. As no one is present to report me, I swear I never saw so sweet a countenance !”

“I am glad you think so. A season in society may do something for her ; at present she strikes me as unformed and insignificant.”

“It is difficult to pronounce upon one’s sister. Ismena, for instance, with all her airs and self-sufficiency, is a person with whom I have no patience ; yet, though she remains on hand, it is not for want of inspiring more than one *grande passion*. Before Lady Tiverton understood the thing as well as she does now, she used to have all sorts of people staying at the Castle by way of making it agreeable ; and there was a younger brother of Sir Clarence Howard’s who had not only the impudence to fancy that he had a right to fall in love with Lady Ismena Egerton, but when Ismy spoke to my father and had him dismissed the house, the fellow went out of his mind, and the Lord knows what. Then there was the Russian secretary of legation at Florence, who actually shot himself after a scene with her ; yet, ten to one, though Henrietta is fifty times more attractive, she will not produce the same effect.”

“Not drive a younger brother out of his senses, perhaps, or cause a Russian sec. (probably after a run against him at play) to blow his brains out ; but catastrophes of that kind are only good for popular singers, and those kind of people, who want to fill a house for their benefit. Nobody marries *une demoiselle aux aventures*. The chances are that she *must* be more or less in the wrong. By the way, Dick, who were those people with whom I saw you the other night in that private box at Drury Lane ?—A pretty woman, certainly ; but totally without *tournure*. The father’s face was new to me. Where the devil did you pick them up ?”

“The Vassylls are our neighbours at Tiverton Castle.”

“Indeed !—I don’t remember them.”

“They have not been long in Westmoreland. They took West Hill two years ago of Lord Hexham.”

“The young lady has *des écus*, then ?—Why don’t you look after her ?—she seemed very kind the other night.”

“As if you were not perfectly aware that the Vassylls are man and wife !—What are their *écus* to me ?”

“Something, even if the blue-eyed beauty be really the old gentleman’s wife, instead of his heiress. There is nothing so ruinous as a *liaison* with a poor man’s virtuous partner. And so it was an *affaire de cœur* that kept you so snug at the Castle last winter, when you had promised to meet me at Paris ?”

“You must first prove that I possess a heart to have an affair with,” replied Dick, stretching himself and yawning. “All I am conscious of possessing just now, is a ravenous appetite for some devilled oysters. Three o’clock, by Jove !—time, my dear fellow, that you should cast your dressing-gown. Come down with me to

the Travellers', I entreat, and I will tell you more about the Vassylls on our way."

The Vassylls, whom the Egertons were discussing, and who, in the estimation of Tiverton Castle, were only "the people who had taken West Hill of Lord Hexham," stood on somewhat higher ground in the opinion of the world.

George Vassyll had, for twenty years of his life, occupied in the colonies a high official appointment, which being luckily compatible with the exercise of his profession as a lawyer, he was able to retire from public life at less than fifty years of age, with a considerable fortune, and the honour of having declined knighthood.

The colony in which Mr. Vassyll had stood next in precedence to the governor, not being one of those to which young ladies are sent on consignment, with Manchester goods and other marketable articles of British manufacture, he had remained single till the realization of a handsome property entitled him, on his return to England, to pretend to the hand of a prettier wife than he would have aspired to at an earlier period of his fortunes.

The confusion caused by the entrance of the rich old bachelor into certain circles of the young and fair, seemed to justify his presumption in requesting an introduction into the family of Mr. Lumsden of Devonshire Place—by the prepossessing countenance and manners of one of whose daughters he had been captivated at some recent party. The Lumsdens were delighted. With five unmarried daughters and a moderate income, such a connection as Mr. Vassyll's was highly desirable. He was invited to dinner—his rubber was duly secured to him—his colonial anecdotes were listened to with respect; and it became a matter of jest among the five girls, *which* of them was the object of attraction. By degrees, however, Anna, the third, ceased to enter into the joke, and her *silence* and blushes decided it among her sisters that she was to become Mrs. Vassyll.

The decision of the young ladies was so far premature, that Anna's embarrassment arose only from anxiety lest she should not be the favoured one of the family. She had listened unmoved to her father's recital of the fine fortune Vassyll had brought home from the West Indies, and to her mother's anticipations of the handsome establishment he was likely to set up in London. But while her sisters were dreaming of the jewels and equipages which such a man would lavish on his wife, Anna was captivated by the union of strong sense and gentle manners perceptible in their new acquaintance.

The plainness of Mr. Vassyll's dress, and the simplicity of his demeanour, preserved him from the uncouthness usually observable in persons who have spent their lives in a colony. With due allowance for his age and wig, he was really a personable man; and even had his fortune been inconsiderable as those of the younger sons, rising young lawyers, and junior partners of city firm

who constituted the Lumsdens' acquaintance, he would still have inspired Anna Lumsden with a degree of esteem and affection comprising all her present notions of love.

She was a very happy girl, therefore, when her father announced, one morning after breakfast, that Mr. Vassyll had made proposals for her hand ; and her parents as happy, when they saw that the marriage, so desirable in a worldly point of view, would be also one of inclination. Father, mother, brother, sisters, friends, all were delighted ! Mr. Vassyll did himself honour in every preliminary arrangement. The bride's fortune was given up to increase the portions of her sisters ; and his wedding gifts to every thing bearing the name of Lumsden were of the handsomest description. Of all the brides who ever moistened their white satin with tears, under the portico of that temple of ostentatious matrimony, Marylebone Church, Anna's prospects seemed destined to be the happiest. She was an object of envy to the young ladies of her acquaintance, and of affection to the man whom she preferred to all the world. At nineteen years of age, what a destiny to have accomplished !

In due time, Mr. and Mrs. Vassyll settled themselves in a showy house in Portland Place ; with precisely the number of servants and horses which Mrs. Lumsden had predicted to the daughter who should be so lucky as to obtain the preference. The mild, pretty Mrs. Vassyll became a beauty in the mediocre circle in which, whether by birth or marriage, she was entitled to move ; and, while her husband lounged away his day at his club or with his stockbroker, his pretty wife devoted herself to fashionable shopping, visiting, or the park. She had always one or two sisters with her, requiring amusement ; and Vassyll, who was the kindest of men, was pleased that his pretty wife should enjoy the satisfaction of promoting her sisters' pleasures, by dances at home, operas, plays, or excursions to Epsom races. Even when she had two children to occupy her time, and complete the measure of her husband's domestic happiness, Vassyll chose that she should enter fully into the diversions of the season, and, at the close, proceed with him to some cheerful watering-place. He made no exactions upon her time. He was sure of finding Anna in her place at breakfast and dinner ; smiling, well-dressed, good-humoured, and affectionate. By degrees, he gave up accompanying her to evening parties ; the late hours into which the Misses Lumsden tormented their chaperon disagreeing with his health. But this created no estrangement between them. It gave him pleasure that Anna should go out and be admired ;—and on the morrow morning she was sure to relate to him all she had seen and heard the preceding night.

On the other hand, during the daytime, his occupations were necessarily distinct from hers. Like other ex-professional men with a floating capital, he had been persuaded into becoming an

acting governor of several associations and companies, which drew largely upon his time. Because he was what is called an idle man, he found himself condemned to slavery of a less satisfactory kind than when dispensing justice among the niggers. But all this, though it served to keep the happy couple almost wholly apart, had no influence upon their mutual affection. Anna, whose beauty became every day more developed, was still kind-hearted, simple, and grateful to her husband for the eminent prosperity to which he had raised her.

In the Lumsden set, Mrs. Vassyll of Portland Place was a very fine thing. Her family were proud of her. Under her auspices, two of her sisters had formed satisfactory connections; one with a young banker, another with a king's counsel; and when, four years after her marriage, the prompt and noble aid afforded to her father by her husband, in one of those money-panics which occasionally convulse the mercantile existence of England, proved the means of preserving the house of Lumsden and Co., of Token-House Yard, from bankruptcy, Anna felt that she could never sufficiently devote herself to so indulgent and generous a husband.

But though on the best terms with herself and the world, Mrs. Vassyll was not wholly exempt from the little heart-burnings which beset the secondary classes of society in London, who mar their happiness and prosperity by a servile competition with the great; and, instead of forming an independent body, are perpetually striving to push themselves into a sphere with which they have no natural affinities. The beauty of Mrs. Vassyll unluckily attracted so much attention, that she had been promoted, by a course of watering-places, to the acquaintance of a few ladyships, not too fine to improve the attractions of their balls by recruiting among the pretty faces of ignoble circles. Among these people who sought her society in levity, and were prepared to fling it off on pretexts equally slight, Mrs. Vassyll contracted high pretensions. Ill-educated, absolutely unenlightened on all those points of practical morality so strangely neglected by the teachers of youth, instead of grounding her standing in the world upon the high character borne by her husband, and the wealth of which it was the foundation, she was dazzled by the delight of being seen by her Wimpole-Street friends in the opera-box of a Lady Augusta; or having it known that an Irish lord or two had graced the dinner-table of Mr. Vassyll!

She was so far justified in her folly, that these unimportant facts really served to enhance her consequence in the eyes in which she aspired to shine. Those fair friends who were in the habit of choosing their gowns and hats merely because similar ones had been worn by some marchioness, and of garnishing their conversation with anecdotes of great personages, with whom they were unacquainted even by sight, were induced by the same despicable servility to think all the better of the wife of the excelle

George Vassyll, because her name was on the visiting list of a few fashionable women, every way inferior to her and hers.

Vanity affects the mind as opium-eating the body. The deleterious potion of flattery once imbibed, the intoxication must be kept up, or life becomes a blank. From the moment that Mrs. Vassyll heard herself saluted on her entrance into one of her friend Lady Augusta's fancy balls by a murmur of admiration, she could no longer content herself with the insipid carpet dances of her former sphere ; and began to avail herself largely of her generous husband's desire that she should outshine her rivals in dress and equipage. She began to lose her satisfaction in listening to Malibran and Lablache, unless she found a sufficient number of opera-glasses directed from the stage to her box. She began to indulge in the vulgar appetite for being talked of ; and the smallest newspaper paragraph in which her name appeared, as among the loungers at the Zoological or the notabilities at some vulgar ball, agitated her bosom with agreeable emotions.

Despicable as such weakness may appear, it was allied in the character of Mrs. George Vassyll, as in that of fifty other women of her class, with many amiable qualities. She was kind, charitable, affectionate ; a good daughter, a loving wife and mother ; but she could not resist her ambition of being classed among the luminaries of the London season.

Mr. Vassyll, meanwhile, looked on, and, as is not unusual with husbands, saw nothing. He thought it very good-natured on the part of his dear Anna to give up so much of her time and tranquillity for the pleasure of diverting her sisters ; and sometimes gently rallied her on her preference for the company of lords and ladies. But his knowledge of society was so comprised within the barriers of colonial experience, that he could not properly appreciate the sacrifices that were made either by, or in behalf of, his pretty wife. She was pleased, and that was enough.

Liberal as he was, however, Mr. Vassyll's vulnerable point was that on which nearly every individual of his sex is susceptible—viz., his pocket. When, on the Christmas succeeding her fourth season in town, his beloved Anna's annual bills were sent in, he was amazed to perceive that the addition of three or four fine ladies to her visiting list produced the corresponding addition of three or four hundred pounds to her expenditure. Though so recently provided with costly jewels, she had been tempted into the purchase of expensive trinkets and superfluous gewgaws. As he himself observed—ay, in a tone of reprehension, and to her to whom he had never spoken before except with words of endearment—"She had indulged in all the foolish whims and fancies of a duchess."

Poor Anna wept bitterly at this first ebullition of displeasure, for she felt that it was merited ; and, for many days afterwards, could not hear without a start the fatal single knocks at the door, which

she knew to announce claims produced by further instances of her extravagance. As far as possible, she attempted to conceal them from his knowledge, so as at least to postpone the admission of her offences. The fact, however, was unconcealable, that Mr. Vassyll had exceeded his income by a thousand pounds; his over-indulgence of his wife's expensive tastes being the source of the evil!

A man more experienced in the ways of London society would have congratulated himself, when suddenly awakened to a sense of the ordeal to which his young and pretty wife had been exposed, that she had committed no greater fault than a wanton waste of money. For no one accused Mrs. Vassyll of coquetry—no one accused her of flirting;—her error was simply the fruit of a cold-blooded vanity, the fruit in its turn of a misdirected education. But Mr. Vassyll saw only the result—felt only the result—complained only of the result;—that the balance of his banker's book was eleven hundred and thirteen pounds against him at the close of the year; that he was obliged to sell out; that, with a young family on the increase, his capital was diminishing!

There is scarcely a man on earth—certainly none who has been four years married—with philosophy enough to bear such a grievance unresenting. Vassyll, whose chairmanship and committee-manship for half a dozen joint-stock companies kept his financial faculties ever on the alert, was too sorely vexed to keep silence. Even after Anna had confessed her fault and promised amendment, he continued to harp upon the jarring string. He even reminded her of his disinterested relinquishment of her fortune; and assured her that the aid he had recently afforded to extricate Mr. Lumsden from his difficulties, rendered it extremely perplexing to him to meet the demands produced by her unexampled prodigality. While Anna, with swelling heart, sat mortified and silent, her follies were recapitulated and dwelt upon, item by item. Her children's destinies, she was assured, would be endangered by such wanton waste; and the examples of all the Mrs. Smiths and Browns with whom he had been acquainted at Barbadoes, were quoted as a proof to poor Mrs. Vassyll how well and how respectably a woman may live without Brussels veils and bird-of-paradise feathers!

The angry husband at length made his exit from the dressing-room, satisfied that his harangue had produced a startling effect. And so it had—by irretrievably estranging the affections of his wife!—He had let himself down in her estimation by his circumstantial upbraiding. It was his apparent loftiness of purpose and openness of hand which had in the first instance fascinated her youthful fancy; and, after hearing him leisurely recite the particulars of a haberdasher's bill, her reverence was at an end.

And then, his allusion to her want of fortune, her frugal breeding—to her father's embarrassments—how mean, how pitiful!—

If ever woman ran risk of detesting a once-loved husband, it was Mrs. Vassyll on that memorable eighteenth of January !

Still, she felt that she was in fault ; and, still more to her credit, felt that she was not strong enough to resist further temptation. Three days of incessant musing over her conduct—over the conduct held towards her by her husband—and over the conduct she should have expected him to hold under such provocation—did more towards the maturing of Mrs. Vassyll's character than the preceding five years of her married life. She saw that her happiest hours were over—the hours of her girlish illusions—the hours of her implicit reliance upon the superiority of her husband. But she resolved that, having conquered her infatuation in his favour, she would conquer her own weakness ; and her self-examination ended with an earnest petition to Mr. Vassyll to give up his house in town and settle peaceably in the country.

"I forewarn you," said she, with a degree of self-possession which her previous agitation rendered only more remarkable—"that if we remain here, all that has so greatly offended you will recur to offend you again. I cannot answer for myself—I cannot throw off the habits I have acquired—I cannot extricate myself from the set of society in which I am engaged. You have often expressed your regret that, instead of fixing yourself in town, you had not purchased an estate. It is not too late. Let us give up London. The children will be all the healthier for being reared in the country, and *we* all the happier for seeing them flourish."

"No doubt we should—were such a change in my power," exclaimed Vassyll, angrily. "But, relying upon your disposition to assist me in living respectably upon our income, I have settled in town by a long lease of this house ; by engaging in important avocations ; by"—

"You might easily get rid of your lease," persisted Anna, steadily ; "and surely your engagements, as gratuitous director of one or two companies, need not be put in competition with the well-being of your family ?—I candidly tell you that you 'have scotched the snake, not killed it ;' and that, so surely as we pass the coming season in town, we shall be betrayed into spending twice as much money as we can afford. I entreat you, my dear Vassyll, to look out for a place in the country ; remember, *I entreat you !*"

"Entreat as much as you choose," cried Vassyll, testily. "Unless you furnish me with the means of complying with your requests, your earnestness is thrown away. I have advanced to your father every guinea of ready money I can command. Should he fail in his engagements to refund it, or, by embarking again in ridiculous speculations, endanger the total loss of the property, our children will be all but beggars. But, even if eventually repaid, at present I am totally prevented from indulging your inclinations, or consulting my own interests. No doubt you would like a country life for the greater portion of the year ; but you ought to bear in

mind, Anna, that a woman who brings no fortune to her husband, is, or ought to be, scrupulous in the indulgence of her fancies."

Anna seemed to shrink into herself as she prepared to quit the room.

Yet, in spite of the warning thus afforded, Mr. Vassyll was furious when the return of the season plunged his wife into new dissipations and further extravagance, and the return of Christmas brought the evidence of their renewal.

But when Anna, who, though still giddy and still renowned as the pretty Mrs. Vassyll of Portland Place, was still a virtuous wife and tender mother, not only repeated her entreaties that they might retire into the country, but suggested that, if unable to purchase, they might certainly *rent* a family seat, the angry man found himself in conscience as well as prudence bound to comply; and Lord Hexham's estate of West Hill, in the lake country, being just then the object of one of George Robins's flaming advertisements, Vassyll fell a victim to the eloquence of the rostrum—took the place for a lease of one-and-twenty years—bade adieu to Peel's coffee-house and the committee-rooms of Basinghall Street—and settled himself and his family within eight miles of Tiverton Castle.

To settle in a new neighbourhood is an interesting crisis in life; and a first introduction to those on whose agreeableness or disagreeableness must depend a considerable portion of our future comfort, an exciting event. The Vassylls, however, were pre-assured of a favourable reception. The beauty of the wife and the respectability of the husband were pledges in their favour; more particularly as their income was known to be large, and West Hill had been untenanted for the last half-dozen years. Lord Hexham, who occasionally slept there a night or two on his way to the Moors, was nothing compared with a Mr. Vassyll, who threatened to live there all the year round, and bestow as much white soap upon the county as the most established ball-giver in the neighbourhood.

All the world, accordingly, left cards with "the people who had taken West Hill," and all the world was pleased with them when the visit was returned. Mrs. Vassyll's unassuming and composed manners propitiated even the fastidious taste of Tiverton Castle. A well-dressed, agreeable woman, always come-at-able, was a real acquisition to the Egertons; more especially when compared with most of the country neighbours within their reach. They suspected she had lived in a very bad set in town, as her face was new to them; but, as she had the tact to make no specific allusion to her London haunts, this signified little. If the new lady of West Hill did not frequent Almack's, and was not avowed of the Almackites, she was at least dressed by their own milliners and jewellers, and every way a presentable person.

To poor Anna the vicinity of Tiverton Castle was at once a

blessing and a curse. Her vanity was gratified by finding within easy reach the description of society which it had cost her so much pains, money, and mortification to seek in London ; but, from the moment of her first dinner-party at the Castle, she felt that the dangers she had fled from were about to beset her in her remote retreat.

Again, again, and more vividly than ever, the temptations of vanity were around her ! The Tivertons must be invited in return. The Tivertons must be entertained in some degree in the style to which they were accustomed. A thousand habits and novelties struck her in their establishments which must be immediately adopted in her own. She dreaded the thought of detecting Lady Tiverton's eye-glass fixed upon some deficiency in the arrangements of her tables, or Lady Ismena's fastidious lip curled at the commonplace decorations of her boudoir ; and was already planning improvements at West Hill, with a view to call forth their commendations.

But experience was so far improving the wisdom of Mr. Vassyll, that he began to hold remonstrance better than reproof ; and instead of allowing his wife, as before, to run unchecked a career of extravagance, he acquainted her at once, in measured terms, that as his income did not equal by a sixth part that of his neighbour the Earl, he had no intention of competing with the magnificence of Tiverton Castle ; and that, unless his noble neighbours could be entertained on his present service of plate, and with the furniture selected for West Hill by the late Marchioness of Hexham, they should not be entertained at all.

To this marital decree Mrs. Vassyll was forced to submit. But the tone in which it was issued completed her disgust ; and the first day the Tivertons dined at West Hill, their pretty hostess, blushing with the shame of having no iced hock, no claret pitchers, no macédoine to offer them, became convinced that her husband was not only a tyrant, but a Goth.

Instead of perceiving that her new friends congratulated themselves on finding West Hill, for the first time, an acquisition to the neighbourhood, she dwelt only upon the deficiencies to which they were totally indifferent.

"How sick I am of hearing you talk of those people at West Hill !" cried Dick Egerton to Lady Ismena, when, on his return from Paris some months afterwards, he found his sister enthusiastic in praise of the Vassylls.

"Consider what a relief they are to us after the humdrum obsequiousness of those horrid Waltons and Davises," replied the young lady. "Mrs. Vassyll's voice is a contr'alto, and she can take a second very tolerably. Then the *l'es* Vassyll relieves us of *papa* when we have people staying in the house, by prosing to him about what they call the money-market—though what the word means I can scarcely conjecture."

It means a sort of Covent Garden, situated in the heart of the city, where sovereigns are sold in quart measures, like French beans, and dollars in sacks, like potatoes," said Egerton, who had not always patience with his sister's affectation.—"But these are no reasons why I should endanger my mare's knees with that horrible cross-road by the crags! If you want to ride to West Hill, surely you can venture with old John, as you say you have often done before?"

"It being precisely as great a compliment for John, the groom, to make his appearance in Mr. Vassyll's stables, as for Mr. Egerton to make *his* in Mrs. Vassyll's drawing-room!" retorted Lady Ismena, with a contemptuous smile. "I certainly fancied it would be a proof of good breeding if you rode over to make the acquaintance of these new settlers in a county of which papa is Lord-Lieutenant. But, just as you please: Mrs. Vassyll will probably live and die in peace, as much as if she had received the vast compliment of your visit."

"No doubt she will!—How the devil should *my* acquaintance prove an acquisition to people who, I understand from my father, have been living all their lives with cits and stockbrokers? Just conceive *me*, or Adolphus, planted in a circle of such people;—pressed flat by a weight of civility from the fat, comfortable, domestic couple who are distributing their coals and blankets this Christmas at West Hill!"

Again Lady Ismena indulged in a contemptuous smile. But her younger sister, who had listened in silence to their dispute, now broke in—"Mr. and Mrs. Vassyll, fat and comfortable!" cried Lady Henrietta;—"that gaunt, stern, disagreeable man—that slender, elegant woman!—My dear brother, Paris must have rendered you more near-sighted than ever!"

"Where am I likely to have ever seen such people, child?" replied he. "However, as Ismy seems determined to favour me with a scramble across the country, let me even brave my miseries at once."

But Lady Ismena had been long her brother's scholar, and had profited by his lessons. It was now *her* turn to refuse. Anxious to hear him recant his blasphemies against her new favourite, she resolved that accident should bring the fastidious dandy into the company of Mrs. Vassyll.

The design did not prosper. Egerton had been three weeks in Cumberland—had been seen hunting, shooting, riding, dining, at all the country places in the neighbourhood, and was still only heard of at West Hill! The discourtesy of Lord Tiverton's younger son was very little thought of by Mr. Vassyll, whose time was fully occupied by the unwonted task of managing an estate. But Anna, already fascinated by the high-bred manners of Lady Tiverton and her daughters, and the graciousness of her welcome at the Castle, was really curious to see the brother whom

she had heard vaunted by Lady Ismena and Lady Henrietta as the most agreeable young man in London :—"handsome as Lord Egerton, but far more entertaining!" She was surprised that they had not brought him to visit her; and her conjectures became so strongly excited, that when at length an accidental meeting took place between the families (the Egertons being on horseback in the high-road, and Mrs. Vassyll airing in her open carriage), great was the surprise on both sides! Dick Egerton was as much amazed to discover in their new neighbour a countenance by which he had been struck at the Opera and other public places, as Mrs. Vassyll to find in Lady Ismena's overlauded brother a person of very ordinary attractions.

"Not half so handsome as Lord Egerton!" was her reply to Lady Ismena's whispered inquiries of her opinion; a remark which the young lady was careful to repeat to her self-sufficient brother when, after ten minutes' gossip, the parties separated to pursue their airing.

"She thinks so, does she?"—was Egerton's muttered reply. But the disparaging remark of his new acquaintance could not obliterate from his remembrance the elegance of her form, the fine oval of her face, the lustrous blackness of the bands of hair falling low upon her cheeks, or the transparency of her clear brown complexion. As he rode on in silence, he could not forbear regretting that a woman so formed to be an ornament to society, should have thrown away her days among a set of Hottentots, unworthy to breathe the breath of civilized life. Already he had ascertained that "the people who had taken West Hill" were nobodies. It was, indeed, mortifying that a nobody should be so surpassingly lovely!

Piqued by her impertinent preference of his brother, he resolved to waste a little time in bringing her to a different way of thinking. There was no difficulty in obtaining from his father a message on county business, entitling him to wait the following day upon Mr. Vassyll; who, as he expected, proposed, at the conclusion of his visit, that he should repair from the library to the drawing-room.

Seated calmly at her little work-table, in a simple morning dress, the beauty of Mrs. Vassyll was far more conspicuous than on the preceding day. Dick Egerton could not conceal his amazement that any thing without the pale of Almack's should be so elegant, so bewitching; and instead of following up as a jest his scheme of supplanting his elder brother in the admiration of "the associate of cits and stockbrokers," he, the eschewer of morning visits, sat more than an hour at West Hill, entranced by the charms of the pale and gentle hostess, who was exerting herself to do its honours!

Already her paleness and gentleness had decided him that she was not in the full enjoyment of the vulgar, connubial happiness

he had attributed to a Mr. and Mrs. Vassyll of Portland Place. There is a peculiar restlessness of expression in the eyes of a woman in company with a husband with whom she is on bad terms, which the experienced tact of Egerton did not fail to detect in those of his new beauty. He saw that Anna was discontented with her destinies.

Since her domestication with her lord and master in a secluded country seat, her dissatisfactions were, in truth, fifty-fold increased. Separated for the first time from her family, alienated for the first time from society, she felt exceedingly dull, and attributed the lowness of her spirits to incompatibility of taste and temper, with a husband whose years more than doubled her own. She had now ample leisure for musing; she had now full opportunity for interrogating her heart. She sometimes allowed herself to admit that she had thrown away her youth in exchange for a social position inefficient to secure her happiness; and the company of a man who thought more of a cipher added to his amount of bank stock, than of the rich treasure of her affections. The faculties of poor Anna's uncultivated mind were bursting into the full development of womanhood. She had learned to survey and estimate her destinies; and, as Dick Egerton rightly conjectured, the investigation gave rise to feelings of disappointment and vexation. She experienced want of sympathy, of companionship; she sighed after the refinements of Tiverton Castle and the society of those whose affection would enhance its pleasures; and shuddered as she turned from the dreams of happiness in which she permitted her solitude to revel, to the realities of a domestic evening with a man who snored in his easy-chair—pored over the newspaper through his spectacles—or comforted his catarrh by spitting into the fireplace. His valuable qualities were forgotten—his kindness was disdained—for she found his company insupportable.

Such were the sentiments which imparted sadness and abstraction to Mrs. Vassyll's young brow, and which Egerton had the art to discover and turn to account. Lady Tiverton, who was too much occupied in manœuvring for her daughters to take much heed of the movements of her son, scarcely noticed that the fastidious Dick condescended to prolong to three months the three weeks he had threatened to devote to shooting his father's pheasants and coursing his hares; but it served her as a capital pretext for inviting to the Castle two or three young lords and heirs-apparent, whom he deigned to call his friends. She did not perceive that the greater portion of his time was spent at West Hill. She did not perceive that on his return home he was absent and irritable; no longer affectedly absent or conceitedly irritable, but suffering under the genuine influence of feelings painfully pre-occupied.

For, to his great surprise, the young gentleman who had intended to come, see, and overcome, found the associate of cits and stock-

brokers, if not insensible to his attractions, inflexible by his attentions ; and he was compelled to alter the mood of the latter verb, and own himself overcome in his turn. In the glare and bustle of London, the devotedness of a young Honourable holding so high a place in the lists of fashion, might not perhaps have been without danger to a woman whose weakness was vanity—a frailty of the head rather than the heart. But amid the romantic glades of Cumberland, Dick Egerton was out of his sphere. The tone of his character was unaccordant with the time and place. His listlessness, real or assumed, became tiresome in an habitual morning visitor, whose pretensions there were none to admire ; and though the superficial refinements of the London dandy and Parisian *elegant* tended to increase her disgust towards the unpolished habits of her husband, they did not serve to fill up the void in her aching heart.

Egerton was too wary, indeed, to risk his dismissal by the avowal of his projects ; but when, at the close of three months' daily and almost hourly meetings, and the intimacy promoted by the theatricals and other familiar diversions of a country-house during the Christmas holidays, the young M.P. found himself compelled to repair to London for the meeting of Parliament without having effected any thing by his assiduities, unless to render Mrs. Vassyll more dispirited and her home more distasteful than ever, he swore on his way up to town to banish his rustic idol from his thoughts ; and found himself thinking of her an hour afterwards with a degree of ardour more nearly resembling genuine passion than it had ever appeared probable would warm the bosom of a disciple of his uncle Adolphus.

Under such an influence, young Egerton began to speak and act more naturally than he was ever known to do before. St. James's Street disowned him, and his clubs knew him no longer. Exclusively occupied with the idea of returning to Tiverton Castle, and spending his mornings as before in confidential idling over a work-table, beside which the sweetest of human faces smiled at his sallies or argued against his fantastical theories—he forgot to be impertinent, he forgot to be listless ; and it was at that period he acquired the reputation reported to him by Adolphus Egerton, of being a most attentive member of parliament. Unattracted by the pleasures of society or the allurements of dissipation, Egerton scarcely seemed himself, and any change was for the better !

The end of the summer, or rather the beginning of autumn, which periodically loosens the bondage of modern senates, sent him back into Cumberland ; but only to convert the indifference of Mrs. Vassyll into displeasure. Having suffered his sentiments to become apparent, she not only resented the insult, but resented his having forced her to resent it.

For want of companionship and sympathy at home, George Vassyll was now sinking into a country gentleman in the narrowest

acceptation of the term ; that is, a country gentleman intent only upon extracting the greatest amount of pence from the smallest amount of land ; and thus, abandoned to herself by the husband whose soul was wrapt up in his farm, the society of an intelligent human being was too valuable to be relinquished without a pang. But the pang once over, Anna was thankful that the offence had been given and punished ; and that her respect for herself and love for her children enabled her to resent pretensions, of which her indifference as a wife might otherwise have diminished her abhorrence.

When Egerton quitted on *this* occasion the wilds to which he had condemned himself, it was no longer in sorrow, but in anger. A feeling of pique had originally drawn his attention towards the country neighbour who preferred Lord Egerton's personal appearance to his own ; and deeper vindictiveness now stimulated him to the pursuit of one by whom his addresses had been contemptuously rejected. Poor George Vassyll, who, according to the proverbial weakness of husbands, evinced a preference for Dick Egerton's society in proportion as Dick Egerton evinced a preference for the society of his wife, had taken care to acquaint the young friend who so politely franked his letters, and supplied his table with venison from Tiverton Castle, that he should have the pleasure of meeting him in London in the spring, "Mrs. Vassyll having made him promise to take her to town for a few weeks, that she might see her family, who found a journey into Cumberland inconvenient ;"—which prospect imparted patience to her lover.

"At a London hotel for a whole month of the season ?—*C'est là où je l'attends !*"—was Egerton's secret exclamation. And it was his first appearance in public with his country neighbours which excited the attention and called forth the inquiries of Adolphus Egerton.

During the first fortnight after the Vassylls' arrival, he studiously abstained from coming in contact with them ; leaving his card at the hotel as a matter of ceremony, and noticing Mrs. Vassyll only by a distant bow when they met in public. In spite of her previous intentions of reducing him to this humble posture, Anna was disappointed ! She chose the reserve established between them to be *her* act and deed, rather than his own. Her sisters, too, were indignant that a member of the Tiverton family, with whom the Vassylls were so intimate in the country, should pointedly keep aloof in town.

"They supposed Mr. Egerton did not think them fine enough to be seen with at the Zoological Gardens, or calling their carriage at the Opera !" And Anna, to whom he had sworn that to be the meanest of her servants were preferment beyond his hopes, resolved that they should, on some single occasion, witness her influence over the feelings of the wittiest and most fashionable of the men of wit and fashion about town.

As Egerton had already said, it was *there* he awaited her!—When, on the next occasion of their meeting in public, Mrs. Vassyll stopped to address him with a captivating smile, he accepted the extended olive-branch with an air of most contrite humility; and, upon her inviting him to visit her at her hotel, flew to obey the summons. She expressed a wish to go to Almack's, and he not only exerted his interest to procure subscriptions for her and Julia Lumsden; but he, who was so careful with whom he appeared in public as never to offer his arm to his sister during her first season, conducted her into the sanctuary of fashion.

He was so far justified, indeed, that the admiration conceded to his lovely companion was unprecedented even in that region of "sensations;" for the peculiarly elegant style of Mrs. Vassyll's beauty, her slender figure, and diminutive but shapely head, seemed formed to grace the aristocratic circles into which he had now secured her admittance. Egerton enjoyed the full triumph to which so vain a man could not be insensible, of beholding the object of his admiration an object of admiration to all the world; as well as of finding her, for the first time, in some degree sensible to his own.

Had he conjectured, indeed, that the concessions with which he was honoured were the result of cold-blooded calculation, that he was shewn off as an humble servant to Mrs. Vassyll's ignoble and his own fashionable friends, there would have been some excuse for the game he was playing in return. But he attributed all to the success of his stratagems. "His abrupt departure from Cumberland had brought Mrs. Vassyll to her senses, and determined her to bring her husband to town; and now, poor thing, her only difficulty seemed to lie in making it sufficiently apparent that she repented her former cruelty."

By the husband, meanwhile, he was welcomed to the house as "his noble friend, the Earl of Tiverton's younger son—a harmless coxcombical lad" (most gentlemen of threescore years look upon young men of five-and-twenty as harmless lads), "whom Anna was kind enough to patronise, in order to procure a beau for her sisters;" and the prudent George Vassyll, who for years had legislated over the lives and fortunes of thousands of his Majesty's tropical lieges, and who would have detected an error of a farthing in a quarterly treasury account, actually gave a general invitation to his house and table to the promising pupil of that arch-adept in *rouerie*, Adolphus Egerton!

CHAPTER IV.

A DOUBLY VALUABLE ACQUISITION.

A HAPPY summer awaited the Egertons of Hurley House, when their eldest son returned at length from foreign service to enjoy three months' leave of absence in the bosom of his family. His proud father was never weary of presenting "my son, Captain Egerton," to the recent settlers in the neighbourhood; or of pointing out that the young soldier overtopped him in height by three inches and three quarters; while John was in his turn overjoyed to find Hurley as sociable and cheerful as ever—his little sister developed into a lovely young woman—and his old flame, Georgy Heseltine, still unmarried.

"I don't know how it is," cried he to his sister, the morning following his arrival, "but I always fancy the sun shines brighter at Hurley than elsewhere. I have seen something of the world since I left you, my dear Mary, and a plaguy number of show-houses and fine places; but in all their grand pleasure-grounds no flowers so fine as in my mother's bit of a garden yonder, and no pastures so rich as those of my father's little farm!—Eastwick, too! I certainly never saw a place so charming of its size as Eastwick—so well laid out."

"After the taste of Georgy Heseltine," interrupted Mary, with an arch smile. "Yes, yes!—I admit that both Eastwick and its young lady are perfect; and yet, my dear brother, I cannot encourage you to cherish too strong an affection for either."

"I thought you wrote me word, last Christmas, that Georgiana had refused Philip Mitford?"—cried John, affecting to speak cheerfully, but deeply colouring.

"And so I did—but without adding that it was for love of Captain Egerton."

"For love of whom, then?"

"If I knew, I should not tell you," replied Miss Egerton. "But my conscience is at ease; I have no suspicion of the object of her preference. Georgy *does* like some one—or she surely would not, when her father is so anxious to see her settled in life, reject so many advantageous matches:—Lord Holwell's eldest son, for instance—Sir Clarence Howard, and several others. The Eastwick heiress is becoming a regular object of speculation, to the idlers at Tunbridge Wells."

"If Miss Heseltine be aware of that, I no longer wonder at her hesitation."

"Mr. Mitford at least ought to be a disinterested suitor."

observed Mary; "handsome, well-connected, rich—yet I am almost convinced she has refused him."

"Only *almost*, then?" demanded John Egerton, hastily.

"Nay, judge for yourself. Last summer, he was an assiduous visitor at Eastwick—scarcely a day but I met him there, and most people concluded they were engaged. When suddenly his visits ceased, and from that day to this he has never entered Captain Heseltine's doors."

"Suspicious enough, I admit. But in what terms does Mitford speak of Georgiana?"

"I have no opportunity of judging. We seldom see him, except in public. Unless when he used to visit at Eastwick, the Mitfords do not trouble themselves with this side of the county."

"This side of the county has no great loss! They are cold, disagreeable, people. I believe, however, they are civil to Julius?"

"As civil as Julius will allow them. But he has almost given up society. Aunt Rachel complains that he not only makes a prisoner of himself, but has nearly converted the parsonage into a penitentiary."

"I dare say the old woman plagues him to death! Nevertheless, the account you give me of him is the only drawback upon my happiness in arriving at home."

"You must have misunderstood me last night," cried Mary. "I told you that he was more looked up to than any clergyman in this part of the country—that people went any distance to hear him preach—that his opinion is quoted by men double his age—that his friends are more careful of letting their little follies come to his knowledge than to that of his elders."

"In short, that he sets up for a saint!—an unlucky pretension, considering the life he led at college."

"But are not most men giddy at college? And is it not natural that his opinions should have become more serious?"

"The man who is a sinner at three-and-twenty, my dear Mary, and a saint a year afterwards, runs some chance of being mistaken for an impostor."

"No one ever accused Julius of hypocrisy!" cried Mary, warmly. "Neither do I, my dear. I fear that he is only too much in earnest—for such sudden transitions are seldom permanent. One who has changed so suddenly, may change again;—and the second state of that man be worse than the first."

"Not when his reformation has been matter of conviction. I have seldom heard Julius argue on matters of religion, except in the pulpit; but I am convinced my brother's faith is as fervent as his practices are strict."

"Very likely; but he gives me the idea of a man who thinks it so probable that he may not do enough, that he screws himself up into doing too much."

"Just what I once heard Georgiana Heseltine observe about Julius!—She said it was hazardous for so young a man to create for himself a standard of morality so much beyond that of the rest of the world."

"Did she say so?—A strong remark for a girl of her age! Georgiana is afraid of her old playfellow being caught tripping—eh?"

"She was angry just then with Julius, for having refused to be put in the commission of the peace, on my grandfather's name being withdrawn; in consequence of which, Sir Clarence Howard became the nearest magistrate to Helstone, and the results have been sadly injurious to the parish."

"He had scruples, I suppose;—or perhaps voted the thing a bore."

"Julius vote any sort of trouble a bore?—You have no conception of the laborious life he leads!"

"Only because he chooses to affect the primitive apostle!—And all for the sake of the little obscure living of Helstone; for he will never rise in the church. My uncle's interest is a hopeless case; and I am told Julius has given so much offence to his clerical brethren in this diocese, that his chance here is at an end."

"Meanwhile I believe him to be perfectly happy and perfectly contented," said Mary, warming in defence of her favourite brother, "which is more than can be said of many of his clerical brethren in this or any other diocese. Very few opportunities of preferment would induce Julius to quit Helstone; his influence there is so great! Rely upon it, he has not the slightest desire to quit Helstone."

"Then he is indeed an altered man!" cried Captain Egerton, endeavouring to laugh off her anxiety. "And now, come and help me through my first visit to Eastwick;—or no; on second thoughts, I had rather go alone. I do not want your two bright eyes fixed upon my face to note my embarrassment in seeing Georgiana again, or *her* unconcern in seeing *me*."

Mary was still meditating a reply, when the old Captain and his daughter unexpectedly made their appearance; and the cheerful cordiality of Miss Heseltine's greeting fully justified Captain Egerton's anticipations of her unconcern. Not a blush, not a moment's reserve!—With both hands extended, Georgiana offered him the frank welcome of a sister.

"Wonderfully grown, indeed!" was her father's ejaculation—seeing in the fine young man before him the schoolboy he had formerly tipped on his departure for Winchester, and forgetting that his stature had been stationary for half-a-dozen years past; and when reminded by Mrs. Egerton, who now joined the little party, that since John was last staying at Hurley, he had been quartered two years in Ireland, and stationed two more in the Mediterranean, the old gentleman began to be almost as much in-

terested in his favour as in that of the scapegrace Harry. He had a thousand inquiries to make concerning the wilderness of monkeys, both fossil and vital, bewildering the conjectures of scientific sojourners at Gibraltar ;—and poor John Egerton, who experienced more emotion in meeting again the lady of his boyish love than might have been expected of a captain in a marching regiment, case-hardened by the flirtations of half-a-dozen Irish country-quarters, found his attention diverted from Georgiana's intelligent countenance, to answer a series of cross questions concerning the under currents of the Mediterranean, and the optical phenomena of the Straits of Messina.

"I am glad to hear that you are going there ; your visit to the place may be productive of the greatest benefit," was Georgiana's reply to some remark addressed to her in an under-tone by John Egerton, which the old Captain fancied must bear reference to the subject he was himself diffusely discussing—the site of Homer's school.

"In order to prepare some little notice of it?" cried he. "A paper for the Transactions? 'Captain Egerton's Excursion to the Island of Scio,' eh? I am sorry, however, to find, my dear young friend, that you are starting back again to the Mediterranean so soon—without having so much as dined at Eastwick—without having so much as seen Georgy's new conservatory!"

"Make yourself easy, my dear papa!" said his daughter, "Captain Egerton is only going as far as Helstone. He will be home on Monday ; and, as he has three months' leave, will visit my conservatory a hundred times, I hope, in the course of the summer ; we could not afford to let him off so easily. We have so few beaux in this neighbourhood!—And now Mr. Mitford is away," added she, with a significant glance towards Mary, which caused the colour to rise into John Egerton's cheeks, "Captain Egerton is a doubly valuable acquisition."

Mrs. Egerton, whose penetration in such matters was not brightened even by the experience of having a pretty unmarried daughter constantly before her eyes, was both surprised and gratified by what she regarded as direct encouragement held out to her son.

Captain Egerton, however, felt that he should have been better pleased had Miss Heseltine been less voluble in the avowal of her hopes. The unreserve of her manner proved to him beyond question that she had none of those feelings to conceal of which he would fain have had cause to believe her susceptible. He knew that he had no pretext for disappointment ; that Georgiana had never given the smallest countenance to his pretensions ; yet in spite of himself, feelings of bitter mortification pursued him that afternoon in his ride across the country to Helstone. He took no heed of the beauty of the landscape ; he noted not the favourite spots which had been dear to him in boyhood, and which in dis-

tant climates he had so often and fondly recalled to mind. The sweeping woodlands and picturesque hop-gardens of that rich and fertile district passed unnoticed before his eyes.

In the cheerlessness of foreign stations, it had been his favourite solace to summon Eastwick and Hurley before his mind's eye ;—sometimes, as the Eastwick and Hurley of his earlier years—sometimes, as the Eastwick and Hurley of the passing time—sometimes, as the Eastwick and Hurley of a remote future. But of each of these ideal pictures Georgiana formed the prominent feature ; and above all, in the shadowy perspective of days to come, he had occasionally permitted his fancy to depict the youthful heiress metamorphosed into a Mrs. Colonel Egerton, surrounded by little Williams, Johns, and Juliuses, for whom their grandfather, the eccentric Captain, was sailing frigates or launching rafts upon the Eastwick reservoir !

But it was all over now !—He should never again dream of her as any thing but Miss Heseltine, or rather should never dream of her at all. The freedom of her manner convinced him that she had formed a decided attachment. What mattered it that Philip Mitford should have been refused, when every season Tunbridge Wells supplied hosts of loungers, accepted as visitors by old Heseltine, as if expressly that his daughter might fix among them upon her future husband ? The hateful consequence of living near a watering-place !—Had Eastwick been situated in some quiet, respectable neighbourhood, Georgiana would necessarily have been reduced, by want of competition, to fall in love with one of the brothers of her fair friend at Hurley House.

Such were the young soldier's reflections as he spurred his horse along the green lanes and by-roads, affording a nearer access to Helstone ; through which, in spite of the preoccupation of his mind, instinct guided him safely and accurately towards the place from which he had been now more than four years absent.

At a turn of the road, however, which brought him almost within view of the village, the spirits into which he had been gradually cheered by a pleasant ride in fine weather across a fine country, became subdued by the emotions inevitably connected with the haunts of childhood. Though Helstone had never been his home as it had been that of Julius, it was the place where he was taken every holidays to be reviewed, interrogated, and blessed by his grandfather, and examined, questioned, and scolded by his aunt, even long after, as a smart Wintonian, his sense of dignity was sorely wounded by the process.

But it was not on this account that his feelings were irresistibly stirred on catching sight of the village spire. The early infirmities of Julius having necessitated the separation of the brothers, it was *there* that, twice or thrice a-year, they were annually re-united ; nor had John outlived the remembrance of the feelings of with which of old he used to approach the place where

embrace was to fling around his neck the arms of one who was a friend and playmate to him, yet so much more than either.

He recalled to mind the fine animated countenance of Julius, with the auburn curls clustering round his open throat. He remembered his brother's generous eagerness to share with him his boyish property at Helstone—his pets, his garden, the use of his pony, the perusal of his beloved Arabian Nights. He remembered the truant days, when, leaving the old doctor to his school-room, and aunt Rachel to her dispensary, they used to escape and pass a day in the woods ;—prattling over days to come, when John was to be a field-marshal, and Julius a prime-minister, providing succours and auxiliaries for his armies ; or, at a later period when John was to be a country gentleman and happy husband, sunning himself in the smiles of Georgiana Heseltine, and Julius a popular poet, sunning himself in the smiles of the universe.

And now, he was come again, and about to throw himself once more into the arms of that beloved brother—that friend of his own sex and age, so much nearer to him than any other member of his family ; and how few of their boyish visions were at present realized !—Except that John wore a red coat, and Julius a black, nothing had turned out according to their expectations ; for though the talents of Julius were recognised as first-rate, he was still only a poor curate ; while John, though his professional zeal was rewarded with tolerable advancement, felt that his chance of retiring into a country gentleman, as the husband of Georgy Heseltine, was about as apocryphal as his brother's of becoming Archbishop of Canterbury. As yet, they had done nothing for themselves. They had not at present progressed a step beyond the condition to which they were born, as sons of the Honourable William Egerton.

Insensibly, a feeling of mortification was gaining ground in the mind of the gay young soldier, as he entered what was called the High Street of Helstone ; that is, the scattered double line of old-fashioned, heavy-browed, brick cottages, each with its little garden, which led through the village towards the church and its adjoining parsonage. But in a moment John Egerton's spirits were revived. The place looked more orderly, more cheerful, more creditable than of old. Situated at a hundred miles distance from the family-seat of its aristocratic proprietor, the destinies of the parish were chiefly influenced by the resident clergyman ; and, under the undivided rule of old Dr. Spry (whose thoughts were engrossed by his pupils, and his affections set upon the favour of their noble parents), the village had been suffered to follow its own devices, and return to its wallowing in the mire. Unreclaimed by the ministry of an active priest, its men had become drunkards, its women slatterns, its vestry litigious, its roads indifferent, and its

at a single glance, John discerned that a great portion of

these evils was reformed. The countenances of the people who saluted him civilly but not servilely, as he went by, were healthy and happy. The gardens were trimly—a vine or pear tree was carefully trained against the gable of every house. The road was mended and skirted by a raised causeway; the poor-house white-washed, and its old-fashioned casements replaced by wider windows, with the dial and its quaint inscription carefully replaced over the entrance. It was impossible not to be struck by the altered aspect of the village—altered without losing a jot of its picturesque characteristics of the olden time.

"If this be my brother's work," mused John, as he proceeded, "Julius is a greater man than if he had fulfilled his intentions of shining as a popular poet."

At that moment there appeared on the road before him, engaged in conversation with two labourers who were trudging by his side, in an attitude of more familiarity than reverence, the tall figure of an individual whom he could not doubt to be his brother.

But, instead of pushing onwards to overtake him, Captain Egerton was overcome by emotion. His first impulse was to check his horse, in admiration of the manly gait which the exercises of a frugal country life had imparted to the once slender form of Julius. He now trod the earth with head erect and animated gestures. Small and well-turned as was his head, and elegant his countenance, the thresher with whom he was conversing scarcely boasted greater strength of limb than the young pastor.

As Captain Egerton dashed on after this momentary pause, he could not forbear muttering a word or two expressive of regret that so fine a fellow had not been fated to become a soldier!

The meeting between the brothers was an affecting one. Though nothing further passed between them than the national ceremony of hand-shaking, the mellow voice of Julius faltered as he addressed an ordinary form of welcome to one whose long absence had given him many painful and longing moments. From perils by land and sea—of climate and of service—he addressed his secret thanks to Heaven for having preserved his brother; and could scarcely forbear expressing to John aloud those compliments on his matured personal appearance, which, as regarding himself, were passing through the mind of his brother.

When all the tiresome preliminaries had been submitted to, of replying to aunt Rachel's manifold questions, and paying a dutiful visit to the nursery of the old doctor's second childhood, it was a joyful moment to the two young men to find themselves seated side by side, secure from intrusion; interchanging confidences concerning all that had occurred to either since their parting; and, as of old, forming projects of future happiness.

Yet even thus early in their re-union, an instinctive suspicion beset John Egerton that, while he was avowing all to *him*, Julius was not avowing all to *him*. During a whole

an hour or two of the night, spent in relating his regimental triumphs and grievances, his plans for achieving staff promotion, his financial dilemmas, his affairs of love and glory, he had obtained little more than generalities in return.

"And now, my dear fellow, a word or two of yourself!" cried he, on coming to the close of his list of delicate and indelicate distresses.

"My letters have related all the particulars of my unincidental life," replied Julius, with a sigh. "I am not so fortunate as to have any thing to tell too confidential for the post. Parish drudgery and solitary study fill up the measure of my days; and as to my disasters, instead of having events to unfold so startling as your Gibraltar adventure with the wife of the Spanish general," resumed he with a smile, "my most heroic feat consists in a squabble with my churchwardens. I cannot insult your understanding by supposing you could interest yourself in the roughs and smooths of my daily life with aunt Rachel."

"I can conceive that she must be the devil of a plague," cried John, not choosing to remonstrate against the measured nature of his brother's trust. "But of course you do not allow her to interfere too far with you?"

"I began life with a pecuniary obligation to her, which, thank Heaven, a literary engagement soon enabled me to shake off. But, with the professional life of her father's curate, I am not able wholly to prevent her intermeddling. Poor soul! her chief offence arises from pure good-will. She is always wanting to marry me to your old flame, Miss Heseltine; and I am actually prevented visiting Hurley so often as I could wish, by the vexatious consequences of her manœuvres at Eastwick."

"What consequences?" demanded John, with rising colour. "Am I to reckon among them the young lady's easy indifference towards myself? Are *you*, after all, my dear fellow, the happy man?"

"I neither am nor desire to be. Miss Heseltine suits me well enough as the friend of my sister, or even as my sister-in-law. But if my circumstances enabled me to aspire to the hand of an heiress, few people would less attract me than the daughter, of Captain Heseltine."

"You are more nice than wise," replied John Egerton, pettishly. "Georgiana is a charming girl."

"It is not as Georgiana, but as old Heseltine's daughter, that she inspires me with disgust. I have lived long enough under this roof to have imbibed a distaste for oddities; and should equally dislike Captain Heseltine's eccentric habits, and the vulgarity of his family connections."

"I fancied you righteous-over-much people considered *no* class of men or manners vulgar?" observed John.

"Were I indeed one of those whom you style righteous over

much, I might not perhaps be so fastidious," replied his brother. "That I am less virtuous than you suppose, is avouched by the fact that I have never overcome the influence of Tiverton Castle. The simple life I lead is an enforced one: I still, alas! feel a hankering after the flesh-pots of Israel."

John Egerton was better pleased with his brother after this avowal; and on the morrow he was compelled to admit that it was unnecessary for Julius to aspire to personal consequence by assuming a virtue where he had it not. The simple dignity of the young pastor sufficed. As they sauntered together through the village, no lip worship was addressed to him. But it was clear to John that his brother was the idol of Helstone: an object of affection to the young, and veneration to the old. He was greeted, not with obeisances, but with a smile. He was consulted by his flock, not only concerning things spiritual, but things temporal. He was the friend of their fireside as well as the pilot of their faith; and Captain Egerton soon secretly coincided with his sister Mary, that it would require a highly advantageous prospect to allure Julius from his living.

"I do not wonder at your contentment here," cried he, as he visited with Julius, on his return to the parsonage, the sunny flower-beds he had amused himself by forming, sloping towards a brawling brook. "These people are all so strongly attached to you."

"My parishioners?—Yes!—with the exception of two captious churchwardens, I believe I stand tolerably well with them. But it requires all their regard and more to compensate my unpopularity elsewhere. Not a clergyman in Kent is more disliked than I am."

"Envy doth merit like its shade pursue," quoted John Egerton, laughingly.

"It is not my merit but my zeal they complain of. Younger and more active than most of my clerical neighbours, I am able to exert myself more than it suits them to follow my example. When I came to Helstone, I found my vineyard full of thorns. My grandfather's infirmities had obliged him to neglect his living."

"His *infirmities*?" reiterated John. "You mean his interests. How was the old fellow to attend to his parishioners and his pupils at the same time?"

"I fear he troubled himself little about either. At all events, when I accepted the curacy, the parish was divided into two dissenting congregations, and an empty church. There was but one remedy. The Wesleyan and the Calvinist ministers had effected every thing by eloquence and zeal. I fought them with their own weapons. I opened the church for week-day service, gave them evening lectures in opposition to those they were in the habit of attending, and three services every Sunday. That my system prospers is attested by the departure of the Calvinist minister

and the decay of the Wesleyan chapel. But it has estranged from me the friendship of many whose regard I prized till it was withdrawn on such provocation ;—gentlemen and scholars, but not truly Christians, or they would not have ascribed to an ambitious vanity the labours which were purely conscientious."

"Do you recollect, in Kean's life, the account of the contempts heaped upon him by his brother actors for attempting to infuse spirit into some insignificant walking gentleman's part? 'The little man,' they cried, 'wants to make a part of it!'—Depend upon it, this is exactly what is said by the big-wigs of the curate of Helstone."

"Happily, the curate of Helstone is both above and beneath their taunts," said Julius. "We see no company here, on account of Dr. Spry's infirmities; and for the last two years I have not dined out of the parsonage."

"So much the worse, my dear fellow," cried John. "Nature never intended you for a hermit; at your age, and qualified to adorn society, the thing is unreasonable. As Miss Heseltine was saying yesterday, you will immure yourself in this wretched village, with aunt Rachel as the fogleman of your idolaters, till you become one of the least, and fancy yourself one of the greatest, of God's creatures."

"Miss Heseltine's name is a panoply under which you are privileged to utter ungracious things!" observed Julius, somewhat vexed. "But, notwithstanding the young lady's strictures, be assured that, however small, I do not exaggerate my importance. She cannot forgive my having declined to join a party at Eastwick, when passing a day or two at Hurley last summer, which she considered of the utmost consequence, but to which I preferred a quiet game of chess with my father. It struck Miss Heseltine as extraordinary that any living mortal should resist so grand a temptation as the society of the Mitfords of Mitford!"

"Oh, *the Mitfords* were there!" rejoined John Egerton, carelessly. "Before Philip was refused, I suppose?"

"*Refused*?—I do not believe he ever proposed—if you mean for Georgiana Heseltine. On the contrary, I fancy he is as much in love with Mary as so fine a gentleman can allow himself to be."

"With our sister Mary?"

She is happily unconscious of it, for he pays her no particular attention—so well aware is he that such a match would not obtain the approbation of his family."

"You are certain that he has paid her no particular attention—that he is no way trifling with her affections?"—demanded the Captain, who had long cherished a jealous grudge against Philip Mitford, to which it would have been delightful to him to give vent.

"*Perfectly* certain; and, unless it be through some indiscretion of yours, Mary, who is the most diffident, unassuming girl on earth, will never entertain a suspicion of his admiration."

"On what account, then, did you decline meeting the Mitfords?"

"Simply because they are dull, pompous people, in whose society I experience neither honour nor pleasure. Moreover, they came over a large party from Mitford Hall, to spend the race-week at Tunbridge Wells, in which was included a person whom I systematically avoid—our cousin, Dick Egerton."

"Whom you systematically *avoid*?—See how thoroughly a man may be in the basket after passing a few years out of England!—I fancied you partial to Egerton. Surely you were college chums, or something of that sort?"

"I *was* partial to him, I am ashamed to say how much I liked him!—I once imagined that, in addition to his agreeable tone and manners, he possessed an ardent elevated mind—that he was above his caste—superior to his position. But I was mistaken! The moment I perceived that he was afraid of compromising himself by an intimacy with his father's brother's son because a rustic, I gave him up."

"But why not write me word of your quarrel?"

"There was none to write about. Were Egerton and I to meet accidentally, I should extend my hand to him, if not as cordially, at least as civilly as ever. But I would not voluntarily go to meet him."

"You were right. He called upon you, I suppose, in the course of his stay?"

"Only on ascertaining that Hurley House was a place not under the ban of such people as the Mitfords. It was not till after the dinner at Eastwick he had the grace to leave a card for my father."

"I trust in God my father did not return it?"

"You know his excellent nature. The moment he found Egerton was at the Wells, he did not rest till he had dragged him all over his fields, and shewn him his plantation of Indian corn. Imagine the martyrdom I was suffering all the time."

"At least the fine gentleman betrayed no symptoms of sauciness?"—cried the young soldier, reddening. "You did not observe him disposed to quiz the thing?"

"No, no—my studied coolness keeps him somewhat in awe. But, to say the truth, I never saw even the most impertinent fellow disposed to quiz my father. There is something so genuine in his frankness and good-humour, that, even unbacked by worldly advantages, it commands respect. Dick Egerton behaved with perfect propriety—won the hearts of Mary and my mother by seizing or making opportunities of praising *me*—and almost won mine by resisting my father's invitation to dinner. For worlds I would not have had him dine at Hurley!"

"You seem to attach vast importance to this young gentleman," cried Captain Egerton, somewhat piqued. "After all, people

greater consequence than my uncle Tiverton's younger son have dined with my father, and without any great derogation."

"You speak of him as my uncle Tiverton's younger son; I, as Dick Egerton—as 'Dicky Edge'—as a man who at six-and-twenty has created for himself a position in the world."

"A further proof how completely colonial life places one in the basket!—I was unaware he had done any thing to distinguish himself. Beyond a tolerable speech or two in parliament, I knew not that he had even attempted it."

"For a young member of his rank and appearance to have made two or three tolerable speeches is a great thing. The political world is always on the look-out for recruits of that description. Ministers are glad to refresh their party and illustrate the Order at the same time. But I was not alluding to his political promotion—Egerton's influence in society is the thing that gives him consequence. In this secluded place, as you may suppose, I know little of what is passing in the world. 'But the loopholes of retreat' are open to every man's gazing; and I have reason to know, from Mitford and others, that Egerton has attained that sort of *ignis fatuus* brilliancy, the result of a species of malaria, generated by the fashionable quarters of London—the mere phosphorescence of corruption."

"Much good may it do him! Well, we are not likely to come in contact, so that my self-love will remain unwounded," observed John. "And pray what did Georgiana Heseltine think of this new branch of the Egerton family?"

"The Misses Mitford were too proud of having such a paragon among them to let her catch more than a glimpse of him!—Handsome and agreeable she could not fail to think him."

"Surely not the puppy you describe?"

"I am not aware of having described him as a puppy—his self-conceit is of too subtle a nature to be ostensible. Egerton's dress and manners are studiously simple."

"Then you think Miss Heseltine *did* admire him?" again anxiously demanded John.

"To say the truth, I never thought about the matter; but, unless she differ strangely from the rest of her sex, she probably fell desperately in love with him, and has thought all other men atoms, from that day to this."

"Since you are jesting, I am satisfied," said his brother, laughing as he took his candle to retire to bed. "No doubt, jealousy makes an ass of me as well as of the rest of the world; but I shall not be at ease till I have discovered my successful rival at Eastwick."

Luckily, John Egerton's soreness on the subject did not allow him to mention Georgiana Heseltine's name on the morrow in presence of aunt Rachel; or she would instantly have proclaimed her ungrateful nephew, Julius, to be the happy man! She had

long been convinced that Julius's well-earned fame, furthered by her own stratagems, had proved too much for the young heiress; and that nothing but the contempt entertained by the St. John of Helstone for the treasures of this world, prevented his speaking the word and becoming son-in-law to Captain Heseltine.

But having escaped the chance of enlightenment from her lips, John Egerton was not likely to derive it from personal observation. Miss Heseltine, in most cases somewhat too decided in the avowal of her opinions, seemed to take particular delight in finding fault with the conduct of Julius Egerton. Vexed by seeing him held up as a pattern to the county, and worshipped as an idol by his family, she never failed to point out every speck and blemish, real or imaginary, in his character or conduct. Even Captain Egerton considered her comments too severe, when, on his return from his visit to Helstone, he communicated his surprise at the vast influence exercised by his brother.

"*Parmi les aveugles un borgne est roi!*" said she, as they strolled together along the Eastwick shrubberies. "These Helstone people had been so long accustomed to the lukewarm doctrines of the mumbling old rector, that (like Caliban, when he mistook the reeling Trinculo for a god) they were ready to fall down and worship the first man with half a grain of understanding, deputed to expound to them the words of salvation. The country squires near Helstone, you say, desert their parish churches to hear him preach—very likely! Since the days of Cæsar's Commentaries, no one has been civil enough to praise the intellectual progress of the county of Kent!—From the days of the Holy Maid to those of Sir William Courtenay, we have been apt to run wild after charlatans!"

"You wrong your taste in calling Julius a charlatan," observed Captain Egerton, almost angrily. "The strength of his preaching lies in its simplicity."

"So does that of Stone Henge, which does not prove it to be the altar of the true faith; however, if you please, he shall *not* be a charlatan—he shall be the dupe of his own imagination. But either in the one capacity or the other, were he placed in London, Dublin, Edinburgh, Oxford, Cambridge, instead of poor, impotent, half-witted Helstone, you would hear no more of Mr. Egerton's inspired preaching! He would be at best a promising young man. If he produced any thing like an effect on the mind of society, it would be because he was the nephew of an earl."

"Admit, at least, that Julius took a remarkable degree!" exclaimed John Egerton. "His being the nephew of an earl had nothing to do with that?"

"I never affected to consider him a dunce; he took a very remarkable degree, and in nothing more remarkable than the little importance it gave him in the university. He slunk away

from college, not as if too modest to enjoy his honours, but as if too awkward to turn them to account."

"Who told you so—(for you, I imagine, were not of Trinity ?)"—cried Egerton. "You can only speak from hearsay."

"I speak from the report of one very near to him in blood and friendship," replied Miss Heseltine, unhesitatingly—not being aware that the Captain, already apprised of Dick Egerton's visit to Eastwick, was able at once to trace her intelligence to its source. "He who, possessing such capabilities as your brother, is unable to turn them to account, sinks in *my* mind below the blockhead who is naturally deficient."

"A man can but distinguish himself in his allotted sphere," remonstrated John. "Julius was destined to be curate of Helstone, and as curate of Helstone he is as much honoured as curate can be."

"Were he the great genius that you and aunt Rachel would fain coax him into believing himself, he would *not* be curate of Helstone !" replied Miss Heseltine, calmly ; "he would have placed himself in a higher sphere. Instead of devoting his youth to converting crazy old men and lazy old women, who hunger after the parsonage tracts because they are accompanied by the parsonage broth and blankets, he would have adhered to the university."

"You blame him, in short, for making himself useful in his generation, instead of aspiring to become a shining light ?—I can give you, however, an explanation of his conduct, which has escaped the knowledge of your friendly informant, Mr. Egerton."

"Mr. Egerton ?"

"I am aware of my cousin's visit here, and Julius equally so of his treacherous dispositions. The circumstance, Miss Heseltine, which made a residence at Cambridge disagreeable to my brother, was pecuniary difficulty. In the society of Dick Egerton's fashionable friends, he incurred boyish debts, which his acceptance of the curacy of Helstone enabled him to discharge without inconveniencing his family."

"*Debts ?*"—reiterated Miss Heseltine, with flushing cheeks, deeply mortified at having drawn forth this painful admission from the brother of Julius. "And that I should never have suspected it, when I noticed his reluctance to return to Cambridge ! How stupid, how unobservant ?—When my father would have taken such pleasure in releasing him without those fatal conditions which I conclude were imposed by the Sprys for their own accommodation. Chain himself down to the obscurity of Helstone for a few paltry hundreds !"

"From his grandfather, Julius could receive without humiliation an advance which, with Captain Heseltine, must have placed him in the light of an unjustifiable borrower."

"Nonsense, nonsense !—Had Julius half the greatness of mind

for which you give him credit, he would have felt on such an occasion that he was turning to honourable account a sum lying useless in the hands of a man who loves him like a father. He is well aware that my father has more money than he knows what to do with ;—that, saving myself, he has no one on whom to enjoy the pleasure of throwing it away :—yet he grudged him the golden opportunity of being useful to a friend's son, thwarted in his career of distinction by the want of a miserable five hundred pounds !”

And Miss Heseltine, having apparently talked herself into a passion, walked on, swelling and impatient ; while Captain Egerton regarded with surprise this betrayal of interest in favour of one of whom she never spoke but in discommendation. In deference to her petulance, he determined to change the subject, and when he spoke again, it was with reference to some piece of gossip current at the Wells. But Miss Heseltine instantly brought him back to Helstone.

“Granting,” said she, “that your brother had no choice in accepting his grandfather's curacy, his conduct there is certainly voluntary. It is not to pay his college debts that he refuses to dine at Helstone Park, and wastes his time in playing the Cicero with his vestry.”

“I make so poor a champion against the attack of so fair an antagonist,” replied John Egerton, gallantly, “that you must be generous, and allow me to lay down my arms. Julius is an enthusiast—a rare character in these unromantic times, when all elevation is condemned as useless to the community. Some day or other, perhaps, he may become a convert to your opinions, and a worshipper of the positive. May I live to see him win your good graces as a fat and comely dean, a frequenter of levees, and parasite of archbishops !”

“God forbid !” was Georgiana's scarcely audible rejoinder, “or he would forfeit the charm which at present so marvellously distinguishes him from the rest of his species.”

The Mitfords of Mitford Hall deserve more than incidental mention ;—being people of vast importance in their own estimation, and of some importance in that of their county.

The family had been settled on the estate from which they derived their name from the troublous times of that “worthy peer,” King Stephen ; and though its landmarks had never been extended by the exercise of either their industry or their ingenuity, they had not been contracted by vice or improvidence. It was something to have remained Mitford of Mitford ; and, though not quite so great a distinction as Mitford of Mitford thought it, the hereditary landed proprietor received due honour from all the editors of county histories, to whom he had forwarded a sufficient subscription. He was usually defined as the most ancient commoner in the shire.

Georgiana Heseltine, and one or two equally plain speakers, was

sometimes heard to say that there was little distinction in not having been made a peer, for one whose fortune did not enable him to support the dignity, and the feats of whose family, by sea or land, had never caused it to be thrust upon them by the pleasure of parliament. Still, Mitford of Mitford was as proud of being so defined, as if he had flung back into the hands of ministers, or the face of royalty, some bran-new coronet and supporters.

The family, in fine, was what is called "a county family." Whatever certain gentry of Saxon derivation might insinuate about the Mitfords having only come over with the Conqueror, Norman adventurers (whose original name of *Muidfort* was about as dignified as Pint-pot or Quart-measure), *there* had they abided for seven centuries, honourably commemorated in corporation archives, dwellers upon their own land, and sitters under their own vine.

Georgiana Heseltine and her flippant mates were sometimes tempted to add a further inquiry of, "Pray what were these loyal people doing during the civil wars, that history records nothing of their services?—How comes it that among the grim-looking Richard and Philip Mitfords of Mitford, whose portraits, lacking a picture-gallery at the Hall, renders its old-fashioned dining-room and bed-rooms still more gloomy, we find no instance of knightly spur or judicial robe?"—"Probably," it might have been answered, "because the competence of the family was just such as to repress its energies;—because it boasted as its chief no estated earl to command the rewards of government, and no unthrifty honourable younger sons compelled to exercise their faculties for the retainment of their position in society." As the head of the house thought it sufficient to be Mitford of Mitford, the younger branches sank easily into utter insignificance.

Such was the social position which, every dozen years or so, caused Mitford of Mitford to be pricked for sheriff; and which intitled his wife and daughters, in the interim, to take their places amongst the thrones and dominions of the county in public meetings, race-stands, election balls, and similar gatherings together of the clean and unclean. Countless intermarriages connected them with the most ancient families of Kent and Sussex. They were part of a system;—a link in the great chain of landed proprietorship.

All this did well enough in former centuries, when difficulty of communication rendered London an impossible place for those who had neither thousands to throw away, nor constituents to serve. But, lo! when the era of road-making brought Mitford Hall within a day's easy journey of the metropolis, the young ladies of the family began to aspire beyond the neighbouring country squires, and insisted every spring upon a month or two in town. Why were *they* to be the only damsels of their degree who had never heard an opera or an oratorio, never smiled in the

Mall, nor fanned themselves at Ranelagh? They chose to figure in the world as the Misses Mitford of Mitford.

Sick of town-halls and race-stands, they would fain be presented at court. What mattered village curtsies or provincial bows, when the homage of side-boxes and the ring was essential to the happiness of their age and sex? And accordingly, when, on occasion of George the Third's coronation, the Mrs. Mitford of that generation saw fit to present her two ungraceful, untutored daughters in the gay court of the youthful Queen Charlotte, she had the mortification of discovering that there were few people of less account in the eyes of those whom she fancied herself the equal, than the Mitfords of Mitford Hall.

From that moment the existence of the family became an uneasy one. Disappointment of distinctions to which they had unsuccessfully pretended, rendered them dissatisfied with those they had hitherto enjoyed. The country which valued them, they despised;—the town which despised them, they valued. The young ladies refused their countenance to squires and parsons, just as lords and members of parliament refused all countenance to them; and having failed even at Bath to pick up so much as a gouty Irish baronet, they retired once more to Mitford Hall, to hide the discomfiture of their pinched faces; bequeathing at their death, their portions of five thousand pounds to their elder brother, as a mite towards retrieving the ignominy of the family by some noble alliance.

The gentleman did his best to fulfil their intentions. As there was nothing Honourable or Right Honourable within reach, by intermarriage with which the next generation of Misses Mitford might be entitled to take the same precedency in London they had hitherto enjoyed in the country, he contented himself with the hard-featured daughter of a hard-headed baronet of a neighbouring county; and became the father of the present hard-hearted generation, rejoicing in the designation of Mitfords of Mitford.

The offspring of this alliance, the reigning representative of the family, had married early—married in the course of his grand tour; the rich travelling appointments lavished on an only son having tempted the daughter of Sir Harbottle Scamp, a broken-down *roué* of the Prince of Wales's set, retrenching at Florence, to fancy that she was making a match in entangling the affections of a youth who, when his father died of vexation a few months afterwards, did not succeed to more than two thousand a-year. Sir Harbottle, of course, hinted that such an income was beggary in England; that his son-in-law could enjoy no French cook, no four-in-hand, no opera-box, nor any one of the luxuries of life; and though on settling at Mitford Hall, under the wing of her husband's mother, to whom the estate was bequeathed for life, she was gradually persuaded by the arguments of Mrs. Mitford, sen., to admit that the local importance of th-

family was not without its triumphs, the ambitious daughter-in-law, transferring her own baffled hopes to the destinies of her offspring, determined that little Philip and his sisters should create, at some future time, a higher level for the family of Mitford of Mitford.

In pursuance of these views were her sons and daughters brought up. The Mitfords, who entertained such exceeding horror of *parvenus*, placed all their expectations in seeing their children *parvenir*;—regardless that a Miss Mitford had as little title to be a duchess, as the daughter of the curate of the parish to match with their son. But *they* were privileged people. There was no rank or degree to which they might not pretend, without being branded with presumption.

Fortunately for the views of the Mitfords, the children born to them were precisely of a nature to forward their views. The girls were cold, handsome, inanimate creatures; while the only son was a shrewd, calculating fellow, richly endowed with that available species of talent called *esprit de société*. In tact and self-possession he already outshone his father and mother.

The ambition of Mr. Mitford, indeed, was of a milder kind than that of his wife. In Italy, in addition to contracting a foolish marriage, he had contracted an almost equally foolish pretence to dilettante-ism; which, as his fortune admitted not of its indulgence on his own account, he could only gratify by living in the society of the great, and enjoying the fine arts at their expense. But he had no projects for his offspring: no plans for getting Philip married to an heiress, shoved into parliament, or eventually promoted to a peerage. *His* notions of a season in town consisted in dining with the Royal Academicians—assisting the committee of taste of the British gallery—being admitted to the private view of all the exhibitions—and receiving letters of solicitation from Christie and Philips concerning the hanging of their pictures, and the disposal of their sculpture. He prided himself on passing for one of the most fastidious judges in England of works which, being unable to purchase, it was some consolation to disparage.

Mrs. Mitford overlooked this weakness, for it was one consistent with the habits of the best society. As there was nothing in the deportment of her good-looking, well-mannered husband to provoke the ridicule or disgust of the fashionable young men attracted to her house by her promising son, on his emancipation from Eton and Oxford, she was content.

Philip, meanwhile, as she was never weary of repeating, had grown up every thing that the fondest parent's heart could wish—handsome, clever, accomplished.

Sympathy of tastes and pursuits had begotten an Eton chumship between him and Lord Tiverton's younger son;—Dick Egerton delighting in Philip Mitford as “a very gentlemanly fellow”—

that is, as clever, insolent, and smart ; and Philip Mitford delighting in Dick Egerton, as the son of a peer. On Philip's first appearance about town, the dowager dandy, old Adolphus, had honoured him with his *imprimatur* of acquaintanceship ; and Mrs. Mitford's leading ambition was accomplished in seeing her son adopted at sight as worthy the confraternity of the *blâsés* of supreme *bon ton*—an instance of almost unparalleled success in a young man of two-and-twenty, belonging to neither of the twin aristocracies of rank and wealth !

Flattered as she was, however, by a distinction which not only enrolled her son in the best clubs, but which, *par contre-coup*, reflected credit on her handsome daughters, as sisters of the fashionable Philip Mitford, it served to discompose certain of her earlier plans for his advancement in life. During his schoolboy days, it had occurred to her that London itself could not provide a more advantageous match than the heiress of Eastwick ; on which temptation, she had made overtures of civility to Georgiana's father, and occasionally invited the young lady to spend a few days at Mitford in the course of Philip's holidays.

But now that Philip, thus early in his career, had taken so bold a flight, she almost began to repent her precipitancy. Launched as he was, Georgiana was scarcely a fitting partner for the circles into which he had achieved admittance. Low connections, and the abruptness of her manners, were alike against her ; and the indolent independence of her character admitted of no hope that she would submit to reform her deportment, after the model of her calm, well-bred sisters-in-law.

It was provoking enough to Mrs. Mitford to reflect on the time and courtesy she had wasted to conciliate these Heseltines. Philip, with his personal advantages, might certainly make a better match. He had been passing Christmas at Tiverton Castle with Lady Easthampton and her two daughters, each of whom was to inherit eighty thousand pounds ; and he was stated by the newspapers to have led the *cotillon* with the young Lady Howard de Vaux, at the ball given to commemorate her coming into the enjoyment of her estates.

Mrs. Mitford began to discover that Captain Heseltine's eccentricities were such as might be tolerated in a Duc de Brancas, but ought to consign a retired East India captain to a lunatic asylum ; but to throw off the mask at once was impossible. Though Georgiana Heseltine had never testified much gratitude for the polite notice of the Miss Mitfords, which their mother dignified with the name of friendship, she occasionally accepted their invitations as a relief from the monotony of Eastwick ; and, as in hospitality bound, had induced her father to make parties for them in return, whenever the height of the Tunbridge season afforded unusual attractions to her secluded home. To break through these ties of intimate acquaintanceship without a pretext was out of the question.

Mrs. Mitford was too much a woman of the world to discard at once a person honoured by her familiarity ; and having determined to drop the Heseltines gently, and throw off "her charming young friend" by degrees, the Misses Mitford were instructed to refrain from their usual correspondence with Eastwick during the ensuing London season.

Though too well tutored to resist or remonstrate, this was rather a mortification. Not that they cared more for Georgiana Heseltine than Georgiana for them ; but it was a solace to their leisure to be secure of a stationary country correspondent, to whose sympathy they could relate the number of their conquests, and describe the trimmings of their ball-dresses, and the rank of their partners.

Unobservant of their coolness, because indifferent to their advances, Miss Heseltine saw no reason to object, when, the autumn having brought back the Misses Mitford to Mitford, still the Misses Mitford, and assigned to Tunbridge its usual quantum of attractions, her father proposed as usual to fill his house during the race-week ; and first among the guests to be invited named his neighbours of the Hall.

A polite answer arrived in due season, expressive of "Mr. and Mrs. Mitford's regrets that, as several young friends of their son were staying in their house, they should be prevented the pleasure of attending the races, and the honour of spending a few days at Eastwick"—a declaration which, to the Captain's unsophisticated mind, sounded so like a hint for a more extended invitation, that, in spite of Georgiana's entreaties, a second letter was despatched, informing the Mitfords that the spare beds at Eastwick amounted to thirteen ; and that Captain Heseltine, like the inimitable Mrs. Primrose, insisted upon entertaining the whole party.

The letter having been read aloud at the Mitfords' breakfast-table as an exquisite jest (the Captain's style and orthography being a fac-simile of those of his favourite authors, Sir John Mandeville, and Chardin the traveller), Lord Storby and Dick Egerton, the guests included in the invitation, entreated that it might be accepted. Dick Egerton affected the liveliest desire to be acquainted with so curious an original as the inditer of such an epistle ; and little did the Mitfords suspect that the proposal originated in an understanding between him and Storby, that "Mitford Hall being a deuced slow place—duller than they could have conceived any thing to be appertaining to their friend Philip—it might be as well to make out the remainder of their visit by a move." Any change must be for the better ;—the worst of race-grounds affords consolation to a sporting man.

On arriving at Eastwick, however, the young men were agreeably surprised by the beauty of the place, and the total want of pretension, rendering it far superior to the abode they had quitted. Comparing the attempts at Mitford Hall with their own experi-

ence at Storby and Tiverton Castle, they of course pronounced a failure all that the Mitfords were straining their utmost to effect; while at Eastwick, where there was no attempt at French cookery or French wine, pages or a groom of the chambers, they were perfectly content.

"This girl of the mad Captain's is really a pleasant creature!" was Lord Storby's remark to Philip Mitford, after the ladies had retired, on the first evening of their visit to the Heseltines.

"Tolerable enough for a country miss. My sisters have done what they could for her," replied Philip, with an air of superiority.

"By God!—I wonder you don't make up to her, Phil?"—cried Dick Egerton, drawing his legs upon the sofa, on perceiving that his two friends were the sole occupants of the drawing-room.

"Do you?—I wonder you should wonder at any thing regarding so irregular a genius as myself."

"You irregular!" cried Egerton, jealous of having his privileges invaded. "I look upon you as the most methodical individual of my acquaintance."

"Likely enough. *Your* acquaintance, I conceive, does not lie among the most square-toed people in the world. *Du reste*, if you have any fancy for Miss Heseltine, she is perfectly at your service."

"I suspect the young lady would suit your books better than mine. You, the only son of a man of property, *must* marry for the entail sake, and had better realize as many acres as you can. I, thank Heaven, am safe!—As personal defects exempt people from the militia, being a younger son secures one at least from the *peine forte et dure* of matrimony."

"I fear my *droits d'aînesse* are scarce worth buying at so high a price!" observed Philip, affecting to treat his position in a tone he would have been sorry to hear applied to it by others.

"Pho, pho!—make the best of it, and put up with Miss Heseltine!" cried Lord Storby, smiling significantly at Dick Egerton.

"She suits *you* better than any of us!" added the other. "Storby is too rich, and I too poor, to marry for money; *you* are the *juste milieu*."

"You mean to call me a middling kind of fellow, eh?"—cried Philip Mitford, hoping to disarm their bantering by a joke.

"I mean to call you a lucky dog. The heiress was downright rude to you this evening; and rudeness with young ladies is an infallible sign of favour. As to that pretty girl who sat by her at the tea-table, her cheeks became crimson every time you addressed her."

Philip Mitford was now *almost* embarrassed in his turn. He had just enough preference for Mary Egerton to dislike the idea of exposing her name to the coarse jesting of his associates.

"Some humble companion of the heiress, I conclude?"—inquired Dick Egerton; who, having merely heard her named "Mary" by

the Heseltines, had honoured her with his saucy attentions throughout the evening.

"No, a country neighbour," replied Lord Storby. "I made especial inquiries of our queer host, partly for want of a better subject of conversation, and partly because she is the prettiest girl I have seen in Sussex."

"Prettier than *the heiress*?" demanded Dick, passing his fingers negligently through his curls.

"The heiress is too *brusque* for my taste," replied his lordship. I am not fond of dictatorial young ladies. To blush so prettily as Miss Heseltine's fair friend, is quite conversation enough for any woman. By the way, Mitford, as you know the *carte du pays*, what is the country neighbour's name?"

"Philip was deaf—till, the question having been repeated, he replied, in a tone of affected indifference,—“Egerton, or Edginton, or something of that kind.”

"As if Egerton were a name like another, and *had* a kind!"—cried Storby, quizzingly.

"Egerton!"—reiterated Dick;—*not* Egerton of Hurley House?—not a sister of the learned Pundit of Trinity?"

"Not a cousin of your own, you mean, you conceited blockhead!" retorted Lord Storby, with a laugh.

"Her father lives at a place called Hurley," said Mitford, perceiving an *éclaircissement* to be inevitable. "It is close to Eastwick—and, now I think of it, as her father is the Honourable Mr. Egerton, he probably *is* a brother of Lord Tiverton."

"And that pretty girl is actually my friend Julius Egerton's sister!"—exclaimed Lord Storby. "What a brute you were not to tell me so before, that I might have been more civil to her, and assisted her in putting on her pattens and lighting her lantern. But she lives close by, you say?—I shall pay my compliments to her directly after breakfast to-morrow."

"Pray take me with you," said Dick; "I am curious to improve my acquaintance with my country cousins."

"We must get Captain Heseltine to shew us the way," observed Mitford, affecting ignorance; though, in his annual visits to Eastwick for four years past, he had been a frequent guest at Hurley, and knew the exact point at which it was easiest to drop over the palings dividing its grounds from those of the Heseltines.

The result of this idle rattle was, the acquaintance described in such bitter terms by Julius Egerton to his brother. Lord Storby, whose regard for his college chum was more sincere than might have been expected from the intimate associate of a Dick Egerton, was delighted to find Miss Egerton an agreeable girl, who entered readily into conversation with Julius's friend, and left to her father the task of entertaining her fashionable cousin; and to the great discomfiture of the Mitfords, and amusement of Georgiana Heseltine, all the honours of the races were rendered by the

young men to the simple, unpretending Mary, instead of to the showy beauties of Mitford Hall.

Satiated with the vanities of London, it was a relief to them to find a pretty well-bred girl, who conversed in a natural manner, instead of affecting the shibboleth of which they were weary. The Mitfords, whose talk consisted of reference to fashionable events, incidents of lordly ball-rooms, and the gossip of the season, were puzzled to conceive what a girl, who had literally never crossed the threshold of London, could find to say of sufficient interest to keep Lord Storby lounging hour after hour by her side, and their brother watching them from a distance; for it is not easy for a worldly woman to conjecture the charm imparted by a pleasing countenance to the simplest remarks of an intelligent, unaffected mind. The fascinations of the handsome, accomplished Misses Mitford failed to withdraw the attention of the young Viscount, because the efforts they were making to charm, inspired mistrust. Even Dick Egerton, though provoked to find himself accidentally thrust into the family circle of Julius, whom he was conscious of having treated unworthily, was forced to admit that Mary was a sweet girl, with nothing of the country miss about her—nothing of the *mauvais ton* which disgusted him in the sisters and associates of his lovely friend, Mrs. Vassyll; and when, on their return from Eastwick to conclude their visit at Mitford Hall, he found that Lord Storby's attentions to Mary were established as a butt for the raillery of the Misses Mitford, he was not surprised that their misjudging irony proved the means of hastening the Viscount's departure for Storby Castle.

"Are you aware that our friend, Julius Egerton, is curatizing somewhere in this neighbourhood?"—inquired Lord Storby of Dick, as he was about to leave the Hall.

"A curate, is he?—I fancied old Pelham had given him a living. We have never fallen in with each other since I met him at your house."

"Lord Tiverton is not on good terms, then, with his brother?"—inquired Lord Storby.

"Yes, as far as I am aware of. I never hear the governor talk of his family. Like most men of his time of life, he is chiefly occupied with his affairs."

"There is at least no quarrel between them?—Mr. Egerton of Hurley is under no sort of cloud?"—persisted Lord Storby.

"Not that I ever heard; except from having married a school-master's daughter, and encumbered the family with a tribe of obscure relations."

"You will have no objection to pay a flying visit to Egerton's parsonage on our way to the north? I have not seen him these three years, and long to renew our acquaintance."

"I am unluckily obliged to be in town to-night," said Dick—

not to be hurried into committing himself further by a visit to Helstone Parsonage.

"Then I must go alone," observed Lord Storby, deaf to the hint intending to shew that such a *détour* would be inconvenient to his travelling companion. "I was always partial to Egerton, and am really sorry to have lost sight of him. That Miss Heseltine (a fine, frank, downright girl, by the way, whom I like amazingly) tells me that, finding himself neglected by the world, he is beginning to neglect himself—that he goes nowhere—sees no one—and is an altered man. I must persuade him to spend a week or two at the Castle. Perhaps you will come and meet him?"

"Certainly, if I should be in the north," replied Dick, carelessly; but predetermined against hazarding the renewal of so unprofitable an acquaintance. "Egerton is a good sort of fellow enough;—though, like all premature geniuses, his promise has burnt out without much of a shine. And though (not having fallen a victim to his sister's blue eyes) I am not inclined to cut across the country in order to admire him cultivating cabbages, and catechizing the small unwashed—which, I find from Philip Mitford, constitutes his chief occupation—I shall be charmed to find him restored under *your* auspices to civilized society."

The allusion to Mary Egerton's blue eyes did not serve the purpose anticipated by her crafty cousin, of quizzing young Storby out of his project. The visit, however, failed to accomplish all that it intended. Julius was too much vexed at hearing from Lord Storby of Dick Egerton's introduction to the family at Hurley, to derive much pleasure from his society. There was something so annoying to him in the idea of the fastidious Mitfords and his insolent cousin being assembled at Eastwick, and placed in contact with the simplicity of his father and sister, that he scarcely gave his attention to the praises of Miss Egerton, poured forth by Lord Storby.

"I never leave home," was his cold reply, when, at length, he became aware that Lord Storby was not only pressing him to become his guest, but to persuade his father to accompany him in the visit.

"And why not?" cried the Viscount, undiscouraged by a discourtesy for which he came prepared by the strictures of Georgiana Heseltine.

"Because I find myself unfit for the pleasures of the world."

"You mean, because you consider the world unworthy of you."

"No—the fault is wholly on my side," observed Julius, calmly.

"Then, why not amend it?—Why not come and take a peep now and then at society, that you may be the better qualified to minister to its reformation?"

"My path of life is too humbly appointed for the knowledge acquired in your brilliant circle to be available to my rustic flock,"

replied Julius Egerton, with a smile. "I should learn to be discontented, and nothing else. At present, I am perfectly calm, perfectly happy. I have forgotten all I ought to forget; I am labouring to learn all I ought to know."

"I fear you class *me* among the things you ought to forget, for I appear to have been wholly dismissed from your memory," said Lord Storby, in a tone of pique. And he was proceeding to reinforce his remonstrances with all the facts and arguments suggested to him by Miss Heseltine, when aunt Rachel, apprised by the servants that her nephew's visitor was "Lord Storby," and by the second vol. of Debreton (p. 142), that Lord Storby was a viscount, and unmarried, came pressing into the room with offers of refreshment;—when his lordship, after winning her affections by a rapid eulogium of Hurley and its inmates, instantly enlisted her on his side in support of his invitation.

Before luncheon was over, and the travelling carriage brought round, Julius, tormented on both sides, had actually given a conditional promise to visit Storby Castle during the Christmas holidays!

When Christmas came, nothing was easier than to plead his professional avocations as an excuse for the non-performance of his engagement, and to promise that it should be kept at Midsummer. But Midsummer was now arrived, and there was the pretext that his brother John, after an absence of years, was spending a few months with his family.

It was unnecessary for Julius to add to so plausible an apology that he was resolved not to endanger his sobriety of mind, or disturb the tranquil mood into which he had subdued his spirit. It was unnecessary to confess his apprehension of rousing anew the dormant faculties of his imagination. But Julius was not the less aware that it was only by a life of systematic self-restraint—by placing his happiness in the task of strengthening the weak and comforting the afflicted—by occupying the restlessness of his mind, when released from professional duties, in the cultivation of the abstruser sciences, that he had succeeded in abstracting his thoughts from the vanities of life. He remained painfully conscious of the danger of unclasping, even for a moment, the iron yoke he had scrupulously imposed upon his nature.

In the cordial society of his brother, however, lurked dangers against which he had forgotten to arm himself. He had resisted without difficulty the pompous invitations of the Smyths of Helstone Park, and readily declined the hospitalities of Eastwick and Storby Castle; but he was not proof against the joviality of the open-hearted young soldier, so ripe with the warm instincts of his age. He could not reprove, when Captain Egerton related anecdotes of wilder tendency than became the assumed rigour of his auditor; he could not refuse, when his brother entreated him to bear him company in an excursion to the metropolis, for a glimpse

of its public amusements. Julius comforted himself with the reflection that, as the summer was drawing to a close, the fashionable season must be at an end; and that they should consequently be unmolested by the temptations of society.

That such were his anticipations of London in July, afforded sufficient proof how little Julius had formerly imbibed of fashionable science from the lessons of his cousin!—On installing themselves in a quiet hotel of the West-end, the Egertons were assured indeed that “town was thin;” but with riper judgment upon such matters, they would have perceived that its thinness consisted in being winnowed of its chaff, and that nearly the whole of the great world remained behind, to murmur against the heat of the weather and the prolongation of the session.

Uninitiated as they were, they attributed the stare bestowed, wherever they appeared, upon a couple of young men so eminently handsome, to the fact that very few persons of consideration remained to excite curiosity.

On the night of their arrival, Captain Egerton succeeded in bullying rather than persuading his brother to accompany him to the Haymarket theatre; when Julius, whose scruples against parading his black coat in such a spot were undiminished by the innumerable precedents quoted to him by his brother, took his seat at the back of the box, too ill at ease to derive the smallest amusement from the display of talent before him.

While Captain Egerton's hearty laughter evinced how thoroughly he was entering into the quaint humour of Farren, and the high comedy of Mrs. Glover, his brother's eyes, in wandering over the crowded house, were attracted by the brilliant appearance of a party in one of the private boxes. His secluded habits of life might render him an incompetent judge; but he instantly decided that the two ladies occupying the front were of matchless beauty. One was dazzlingly fair, with a profusion of black hair; the other, whose ringlets were of a golden brown, was remarkable rather for the beauty of her countenance than for its complexion. She appeared to be in bad health or bad spirits; for, instead of sharing the mirth of her companion, she sat apart in a state of abstraction somewhat akin to his own.

The place occupied by Julius commanded an imperfect view of the box. He could see only, without distinguishing their faces, that there were several persons in the background; for, ever and anon, the darker beauty turned with a smile to listen to the remarks of those behind her; while the younger, who was scarcely past the age of girlhood, immediately leaned forward as if to give her whole attention to the stage. Insensibly, Julius became interested in their proceedings. There was an air of high-breeding about these two lovely girls, characteristic of a different sphere from that in which he had been lately dwelling; and a feeling betwixt pity and admiration perplexed him as he gazed upon them.

Just then he saw, or fancied he saw, their glasses suddenly directed towards himself. It was no suggestion of personal vanity; for, placed as he was, the charms of the Apollo Belvedere could not have manifested themselves. Accident had perhaps directed their notice towards the box; but that they were examining the various persons it contained, and communicating their observations to their companions, was not to be doubted. Julius was mortified. The fair strangers were evidently quizzing either himself, his brother, or some person in their immediate neighbourhood; and the delight with which he had been contemplating their rare loveliness gave place to feelings of vexation. He tried to comfort his spleen by deciding that they were unworthy the admiration he had lavished on them—that they owed their attraction to his inexperience—that they were decidedly not women of fashion—perhaps not women of character—and, during the rest of the performance, he disguised his chagrin by joining in the laughter and applause of his brother.

Next day, the professional business which had brought John Egerton to town kept him in attendance throughout the morning at the Horse-Guards; and Julius was left to follow his own devices.

It would have appeared impossible to such men as his uncle Adolphus, or his cousin Dick, that any well-born, well-educated, well-conditioned gentleman, should survey the town, from Westminster Bridge to Grosvenor Square, with such indifference as pervaded the breast of Julius, as he issued from his hotel to lounge away the morning. From Dan to Beersheba all was barren!—That wilderness of streets said nothing to *him*. The local associations, so potent with other members of his family, presented a blank to his mind. He had no reverence for such a street, as the abode of a tailor of renown—for such a square, as the residence of the prince of confectioners—or for such a house, as the *locale* of the most matchless of clubs. To him, they were alike dingy, dusty, and uninteresting; without architectural beauty to command attention, or historical associations to excite reflection. He cared for nothing westward of the Strand. Holborn connected itself in his mind with Shakspeare's plays, Sir Thomas More, or Daniel Defoe. But Carlton Terrace—what interest could he feel in such a place as Carlton Terrace?

Sauntering along Pall-Mall, he suddenly recollected the shock he had experienced there, some years before, in an encounter with his cousin; and involuntarily smiled as he reflected that it was his first practical lesson in the hollowness of the world.

"My first, and pretty nearly my last, thank Heaven!" mused Julius, as he wandered leisurely along. "But for my early disappointment in Dick Egerton, I might perhaps have continued to cling to my college friendships; and, instead of obtaining my present blessed equanimity, might have become a beau-parson, and placed

my happiness in hanging-on upon lords, and astonishing the vulgar visitors of Tunbridge Wells as a popular preacher. How much less happy, and less respectable, than as the obscure drudge of Helstone Parsonage !”

Perrette, when her contemplations were arrested by the fall and fracture of her milk-pot, can scarcely have been more startled than was Julius at that moment, on finding his hand roughly seized and shaken.

“What the deuce ?—Egerton !—dreaming in broad daylight in Pall-Mall ?” cried a young man, against whom he had inadvertently jostled. “What are you doing in town—and where is the brother whom you made your pretence for breaking your engagements to me ?”—continued Lord Storby. And, having passed his arm within that of Julius, he proceeded to inquire minutely after his acquaintances in the neighbourhood of Tunbridge, the pretty heiress of Eastwick, and his friends of Hurley House.

“I have been wanting to learn something about them,” observed Lord Storby ; “for in your stupid letter of excuses you had not the civility to mention one of my Kentish friends.”

“I concluded you would hear of them from the Mitfords.”

“What Mitfords ?”

“The family at Mitford Hall.”

“I have seen nothing of them since the autumn.”

“You are just come to town, then, as well as myself ?”

“Not I !—I have been here ever since the end of the hunting season.”

“The Mitfords have been spending the spring in London.”

“Likely enough. But we do not live in the same set. I sometimes exchange a word or two *en passant* with Philip at the Opera, or Almack’s, or the Travellers’ ; but he would not thank me for troubling him for country news. But now we *have* met, pray indulge my weakness, and let me have my chat out. It is deucedly hot ;—come into the British Gallery and rest.”

To Lord Storby, to “go into the British Gallery” was to lounge into a series of rooms where seats and shade were at the disposal of the public ; but for Julius Egerton to visit such a sanctum of the arts, crowded at that moment with *chefs-d’œuvre* of the Italian schools, was

“To take th’ imprisoned soul and lap it in Elysium.”

Instead of being at leisure to gossip with his companion, he could only withdraw his eyes from the walls to cast them on the catalogue which explained the origin of the wondrous works around him ; and Lord Storby, even while shrugging his shoulders at the enthusiasm of his young friend, could not help enjoying the *newness* which admitted of his being thus excited by objects so familiar to his own eyes. He was tempted to fancy that there

might be luxury in privation, and advantage in having the cup of earthly enjoyment doled out drop by drop.

Having determined to assign ten minutes to Julius for the recovery of his understanding, his lordship sauntered through the rooms; entering into conversation with one or two idlers who, like himself, appeared to have wandered thither from the clubs as a refuge from their own *desœuvrement* and the glare of the streets. When Egerton, as in politeness bound, glanced after him from time to time, he saw him engaged in gossip—now with the officer on guard—now with a listless-looking dandy whose eyes were riveted on his own boots—and finally with an elderly man, on whose arm hung a female of youthful figure and distinguished appearance. Her face being averted, he was unable to decide whether the easy nonchalance of Storby's manner in addressing her were justified by want of attraction or refinement on the lady's part; but, though there was nothing remarkable in the appearance of her companion, Julius felt unaccountably interested by something in his countenance;—something that recalled the lineaments of his father, unenhanced, however, by the expression of contented benevolence brightening the otherwise homely features of William Egerton.

Instinct did not deceive him. The dull, formal individual conversing with his friend had indeed claims on his attention. But when the dull, formal individual's fair companion, on turning suddenly towards him, displayed the ivory forehead and raven curls which had attracted his admiration at the theatre the preceding night, he lost sight of the Titians and Giorgiones, and was all impatience for the colloquy to be at an end, that he might inquire the names of those whom he rightly conjectured to be father and daughter.

Before the smiling, chatting, lively beauty afforded a moment's pause to enable Lord Storby to steal off, they were joined by two other young men;—one of them strikingly handsome, the other equally remarkable for the habitual sneer disfiguring a well-featured face;—and the whole group moved off together, and joined a party which stood discussing the pictures at the further extremity of the room. It was full a quarter of an hour before Julius was relieved from his suspense.

"The lady I was speaking to just now?—Oh, that was the Duchess of Dumfries!" replied Storby, in answer to his question.

"And the gentleman with her?"

"There was no gentleman with her. Those two women were her maiden aunts, two elderly spinsters, from whom she expects a fortune, or something of that sort."

"No, no, no!—I mean the companion of the lady in the grey dress?"

Lord Storby, who cared as little for the lady in the grey dress as for the maiden aunts of the Duchess of Dumfries, paused a moment to collect his scattered thoughts.

"*That!*—Why, by Jove! you don't mean that you didn't know them? I concluded, as you did not speak, that there was some family feud between you. But not to know Lord Tiverton by sight;—Impossible!"

"*My uncle?*—And the young lady?"

"Lady Ismena Egerton, at your service—or, if not at *your* service, at mine. A fine girl enough, if it were not for her detestable habit of throwing herself at people's heads."

"She is extremely handsome," said Julius, gravely. "I was struck by her beauty last night, without surmising who she was."

"Then, for Heaven's sake, come and make her acquaintance!" cried Lord Storby, dragging him along. "It is not often that Lady Ismena stumbles now upon a conquest. She does not usually waste her smiles upon younger sons; but as one of the family you are entitled to an honourable exception."

On reaching the north room, however, Julius was mortified to find that the party had disappeared. A glimpse of the grey silk dress was just visible at the foot of the stairs, and immediately vanished.

"Is your sister gone?" inquired Lord Storby of the stiff, handsome young man, who with his supercilious companion alone remained of the group.

"I am unable to inform you," was his cold reply; and he continued to *lorgner* the pictures with as supercilious an air as if *they* also were country cousins.

"Lady Ismena is half-way up St. James's Street by this time," observed his companion, Sir Gordon Hilfield. "Egerton's short memory does not allow him to recollect that she wished us goodbye in order to go home and dress for her ride."

"How vexatious!" cried Lord Storby; "I was going to procure her the pleasure of making acquaintance with a friend of mine, whom I now recommend to yours. Here!—Egerton, my fine fellow—come and shake hands with your cousin."

No sooner had this cordial invitation passed the lips of Lord Storby than he repented his rashness; for Lord Egerton, instead of advancing to give his hand to Julius, honoured him with one of his most frigid bows. He had evidently no idea of having people thus uncereemoniously thrust upon his acquaintance. Hilfield, meanwhile, who seldom neglected an opportunity of wounding the self-love of the well-dressed automaton on whom it was his pleasure to exercise his irony, instantly requested an introduction to Julius Egerton; and, with affected *bonhomie*, began questioning him about the recency of his arrival in town—his opinion of London—and his judgment upon the works of art before them.

Three words of reply sufficed to convince both Lord Egerton and his damper that the rustic cousin was not a person to be made a butt of. Nettled by the cool insolence of his uncle's son, Julius's brow became clouded with more than its usual reserve; and Storby,

anxious to retrieve the awkwardness of which he had been guilty, took him familiarly by the arm and marched him off.

"I am sorry I introduced you to that ass of a fellow!"—cried he, as they quitted the gallery. "But it is not my fault if people will have such blockheads of cousins. I cannot make out, my dear Egerton, how the same blood can run in your fervid veins and those of that statue of snow; and still less, how your gentle, agreeable sister can be akin to that flighty piece of goods, Lady Ismena! But though those two numbskulls have driven us out of our retreat, don't let me lose the opportunity of pursuing my inquiries. Are Mr. and Mrs. Egerton likely to spend the summer at Hurley?"

"I see very little of my family; but I have heard of no plan for their leaving home."

"So much the better. As you will not visit Storby, I have some notion of trying the Tunbridge waters at the close of the season; and the hope of renewing my acquaintance with them would be a great temptation."

Julius made no reply. His thoughts were wandering back to Lord Tiverton and his son and daughter. He would have given worlds to return to the gallery, and explain to Lord Egerton that the introduction was not of his seeking.

Lord Storby, meanwhile, attributed his silence to an intention of discouraging his purposed visit. "It was plain that Egerton wished him to stay away—it was plain that Egerton was aware of his partiality for his sister. Mary Egerton was, perhaps, engaged to some other man. He had been too hasty in the manifestation of his intentions—too eager to place himself on the list of Miss Egerton's discarded suitors."

"One of my great inducements for a visit to Tunbridge," said he, aloud, "is to see something of your friends at Eastwick. Miss Heseltine is really a charming person."

"Yes—a fine, high-spirited girl," replied Julius vaguely. "My elder brother, poor fellow, is much attached to her."

"Who is *not* attached to the heiress of five thousand a-year?" cried Lord Storby, gaily.

"Jack Egerton is not," replied his companion. "Were Georgiana Heseltine disinherited to-morrow, it would make no change in his affections."

"And, pray, how am I ever to get acquainted with this paragon of brothers?" cried Lord Storby. "Where am I to call upon him—and when will you both dine with me?"

"I have only a parson's holiday, from Monday till Saturday, two days of which are already expired," replied Julius.

"You have no notion how much may be done in the remaining four!" cried his friend. "You must both meet me at the Clarendon at eight to-morrow, that I may try and enlist Captain Egerton

on my side in quizzing you out of your churlish notions, and planning some better occupation for you than a Kentish curacy."

Before they met again, however, the irritation of spirit produced by the impertinence of Lord Egerton had received a counter-check. As the brothers were entering the hotel to dress, the following day, two cards, bearing the name of the Earl of Tiverton, were placed in the hand of Captain Egerton.

"How the deuce could he discover that we were in town—and what can have put it into his head to call upon us?"—cried John, who was in high spirits at the result of his audience at the Horse-Guards.

Julius, who had been careful to avoid exciting his brother's indignation by an account of his adventure of the preceding day, now briefly replied, that he had been seen by Lord Tiverton and his daughter in company with Lord Storby.

"Then, my life upon it, *that* is the cause of his civility!" cried Captain Egerton; "and if I return the visit may I"—

"It is fair to say that I have no reason to suppose I was recognised by my uncle," interrupted Julius, whose inclination for an introduction to St. James's Square was a little stimulated by his cursory view of the dark-haired heroine of the *Book of Beauty*. "Storby probably mentioned to him that we were in London; and, as he has been so prompt in making his appearance here, my father (for whom the compliment is intended) would, perhaps, be vexed were we to neglect the occasion of an introduction to the family."

"What matters it whether the Tivertons notice us or not?"—cried Captain Egerton. "Ten years ago, it was of the greatest moment; but our prospects are secured;—I am getting on beyond my hopes, and you are sure of Helstone, without thanks to his lordship! We are far more respectable and independent as we are."

"Since we require nothing at his hands, our independence need not be very seriously compromised by leaving a card at his door," replied Julius. "It is not Lord Tiverton's fault that my father has chosen to keep aloof from him. If really desirous to promote family union, he will seize the present opportunity."

Jack Egerton's answer was not of so decorous or respectful a nature as to deserve commemoration. Better acquainted than his brother with the ways of the world, he was keenly alive to the slights of the Tiverton family, and was predetermined that, let his uncle's demonstrations of courtesy towards him be what they might, nothing should induce him to cross the threshold of the Earl.

As is usually the case, however, with people who take precipitate resolutions, no sooner was their call of ceremony followed by an invitation to dinner from Lord Tiverton, expressed in the kindest and most unceremonious terms, than John became as eager to accept as Julius to decline.

"It would be decidedly wrong to refuse the proffered olive-branch," cried the Captain; "we have no possible excuse for rejecting the invitation."

"Surely we might plead a pre-engagement?" replied his brother, still smarting under the recollection of Lord Egerton's haughty bow, and conceiving, with rustic simplicity, that he must inevitably meet the son at the board of the father.

"No, no!—let us go and see what these people are made of"—cried Captain Egerton. "If we don't like them the first visit may be the last. I am convinced my father would be gratified by a reconciliation. So here goes!—'Captain and Mr. Julius Egerton will have the honour, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.'"

CHAPTER V.

THE DINNER PARTY.

THE more civilized uncle and cousins of the young Egertons would have laughed heartily had they witnessed the pride with which the loving brothers scrutinized each other, ere they proceeded to St. James's Square at the appointed hour; the elder deciding, as he had often decided before, that Julius was the finest young man of his acquaintance—the most athletic figure united with the most intellectual countenance: while Julius secretly exulted in Captain Egerton's distinguished air and polished manner. "Lord Tiverton cannot but be proud of such a nephew!" was the secret reflection of both.

Other ideas rapidly succeeded. As was natural at their age, they thought more of their cousins than of Lord and Lady Tiverton; standing somewhat in awe of the saucy affability likely to be vouchsafed by Lord Egerton and his brother, but far more so of the satirical survey of the Ladies Ismena and Henrietta. They wished it was all over, and that they were on their road back into Kent.

But their nervous fit was altogether superfluous. The dry, hard Earl received them, and presented them to Lady Tiverton, in precisely the cold, well-bred form he would have used towards any other young men honoured with access to his house; while her ladyship's bow boasted all the unmeaning vagueness which very fine or very near-sighted people are able to infuse into their salutations. There was no more mention of Lord Egerton or his brother at any moment of the visit, than if no such persons were in existence; and when John and Julius made their entrée, their fair cousins, who had returned late from riding, were still absent from the drawing-room. The party consisted of a middle-aged man, with every thing black about him but his head, which was

bears. Your nephew would have made one of the first speakers of the day."

"It is a great satisfaction that you should think so," replied the Earl, politely. "But pray, my dear Sir, let not the word escape your lips;—the young man would only become discontented, and fancy more might have been done for him."

"No great stretch of imagination,"—replied Vivian, who was captivated by the elegance of Julius's scholarship, and the ingenuousness of his character. "But I conclude that, since he *is* in the profession, you intend to push him on?—You do not mean him to keep smothered and inefficient under the weight of a small country living?"

Lord Tiverton muttered something about "having the interests of his sons to provide for," in a tone that might have become the parent of sixteen destitute offspring.

"Certainly, certainly,"—replied Silas, his aquiline nose assuming a scarcely perceptible curl—"but not in the church. You have no one nearer to you than this young man to provide for in the church?"

"I have no preferment likely to fall in," observed the Earl, gravely, "The only eminently good thing in my gift (having been previously declined by my brother for his sons) is in the hands of Dr. Nicewig, the ex-tutor of my boys—a man whose life is as good as my nephew's. Any influence I may have with government, I owe it to my sons to retain unimpaired."

"Certainly, certainly"—again responded Vivian, amused to see the Earl defend himself behind the subterfuge of parental sensibility. "But Lord Egerton has declined all connection with public life; and, as to my friend Dick, I do not imagine his prospects would be materially injured by the preferment of his cousin."

"With his abilities, I should humbly hope *not*!" replied the Earl, swelling magnificently. "Dick Egerton will live to become one of the most distinguished men of the day."

"He must live a long time, then," was Vivian's secret reflection; but he merely added aloud—"Dick is quick and clever; but these are not capacities to bring into comparison with the endowments of the young fellow yonder, whose genius I hold to be of the highest order. Moreover, I fear even your lordship's interest with the Treasury would not suffice to keep afloat a youngster so obstinately bent on wrecking himself as your son."

"On wrecking himself?"—demanded Lord Tiverton, receding a few steps from the door, towards which he had been pressing forward. "Surely Dick has not been taking any steps with his constituents or the administration with which I am unacquainted?"

"I allude to his moral conduct."

"Since that Epsom business last year, I don't believe Dick has risked a guinea!" replied the Earl, connecting the word im-

morality exclusively with the gaming-table and opera-dancers. "Living as he does with Adolphus, it was not likely he should keep *quite* clear of such matters; but I don't consider him by any means wilder than other young men of his age."

"On the contrary, in *such* matters, far less. I believe no young fellow about town has paid less dearly for the company he keeps. But there are other particulars in which he seems to take pride in the display of indiscretion fatal to the career of a public man. The thing is out of date: and even when in fashion—even when the Prince of Wales' school was at its height—we have seen greater men than Dick Egerton thrown into the background by social irregularity."

"I am not aware that the social irregularities of either of my sons exceed those of other young men of their station in life," observed the Earl, with solemn indignation.

"Perhaps not:—for the young gentlemen of their station in life make small pretence now-a-days to propriety of conduct. My friend Dick has, I dare say, a thousand precedents for loving his neighbour's wife as himself, even as the commandment enjoineeth him to love his neighbour. Only there is something peculiarly repugnant to decency in making his father's house the refuge for his vices, and rendering his young sisters the associates of his mistress."

"What the devil do you mean?"—cried Lord Tiverton, now really in earnest. But Vivian replied only by a provoking shrug, intimating that his lordship could not be really deficient in information.

"I have not the smallest suspicion to what you allude!" persisted the Earl.

"You mean to say that the connection between Dick Egerton and Mrs. Vassyll has escaped your notice?"—exclaimed Silas Vivian, almost angrily.

"*Mrs. Vassyll?*" reiterated the Earl.—"Is it possible that you have conjured up all these terrors about one of Dick's silly flirtations!"

"Flirtation is a slipshod word for the crime which is causing so much uneasiness to all poor George Vassyll's friends," resumed Silas Vivian, gravely. "Vassyll is a highly honourable man, though weak enough to have given his honour into the keeping of a giddy girl; and there are those who watch with earnest solicitude lest circumstances should force upon his notice the conduct by which it is endangered."

"But when I assure you," cried the Earl, impatiently, "that Dick pays no more attention to Mrs. Vassyll than fifty other women!"

"Then the fifty other husbands are equally to be pitied; and the corporation of Dunderhead has fifty-fold cause for dissatisfaction," replied Vivian, moving to go.

"What do you mean about the corporation of Dunderhead?"—demanded the Earl, more and more interested in the discussion.

"Only that Dick Egerton's return would certainly be opposed in the event of an election. The Vassylls are highly respected in that neighbourhood, and the neighbourhood is a scrupulous one. A few months hence, and they will neither visit Mrs. Vassyll, nor elect as their representative the Lothario who has been making so offensive a use of the time they hold to be their property."

"I don't believe a word of it—I am convinced that the accounts which have reached you are exaggerated!"—cried Lord Tiverton, much disconcerted. "Mrs. Vassyll has been thrown in Dick's way as a country neighbour—he may have good-naturedly tried to get her on in London society;—but there really is nothing in her attractions or position in life to justify or render probable his throwing away his prospects for her sake. Believe me, you are misinformed."

"For Vassyll's sake, I trust it may prove so; but the world is on the look-out for a catastrophe."

"I shall speak to Dick—I must positively speak to Dick!"—resumed his lordship. "It would be hard indeed, if, because these people happen to have taken Lord Hexham's place at West Hill, the career of so distinguished a young man should be blighted. You must be aware that the greatest expectations have been excited by that last speech of his."

"I understand he acquitted himself tolerably; but I do not the less regret, my dear lord, that you have not kept an opening for one of the most promising young fellows I have seen this many a day."

The praise and blame thus applied, had the effect usual in such cases, of predisposing Lord Tiverton against his nephew, and renewing his predilection for his son. Already preferring to Julius the brother for whom he had exerted some slight interest, the Earl would probably have limited his notice to Captain Egerton for the remainder of the evening; but that, on joining the party in the drawing-room, he found the young soldier in presumptuous discourse with Lady Ismena; while Julius was standing apart, button-held by his friend Storby. The earnest interest with which the Viscount stood discussing his purposed visit to Tunbridge, convinced him that the nephew, thus warmly patronised by the great and witty, was not a person to be ill-used. Advancement, he saw, was to be the portion of William Egerton's younger son; and, such being the case, it were better if the head of his father's family should be the source of his honours and prosperity.

Lord Tiverton's decision on this delicate point was perhaps influenced by the air of somewhat more than indifference, with which his nephew received the attentions of the man whom the Countess found it worth while to court as a son-in-law, and her sons as a friend. While Lord Storby's animated gestures avouched

his interest in the conversation, Julius satisfied himself with vague nods of assent; his looks wandering the while towards a pale, fair girl, attired in a morning dress, seated near Lady Tiverton, still retaining in her hand the book with which she had been amusing herself during the absence of the party at dinner. Julius was evidently superior to a vulgar weakness, which, if it recommended men to Lord Tiverton's affection, lowered them in his estimation. He was evidently indifferent to the distinction of Lord Storby's notice; and why or wherefore his attention was directed towards Lady Henrietta Egerton, who was still treated in the family as a mere child, a father was, of course, the last man on earth to conjecture.

During the idle chat of his friend, the young recluse was, in fact, occupied in wondering why he had not been more struck at first sight by the singular want of resemblance between the sisters. The sun and moon did not differ more widely than his two fair cousins;—the one dazzling in brilliancy—the other uncertain, and at times diminishing even her moderate display of light. The Lady Henrietta now before him, was insignificant, cold, and unattractive; either labouring under or affecting indisposition. She was apparently there against her will, reluctantly compelled to take a part in the conversation of her mother with the listless Sir Herbert Buchanan. Of the presence of the rest of the party, she was probably unconscious. Not even her eyes wandered towards them. And the indifference was mutual; for in reply to Julius's whispered inquiry, whether the silent young lady were indeed Lady Henrietta Egerton, Lord Storby carelessly replied, "Talking, or rather listening to Buchanan?—Yes!—a stupid little girl enough!—Not to be compared with her sister, who, whatever else she may be, is handsome and lively."

Following the direction of Lord Storby's eye at that moment towards Lady Ismena, Julius felt strongly inclined to echo the verdict. She was conversing with Captain Egerton with so much graciousness and animation, that, ignorant how artfully her smiles and sprightliness were calculated, he too was disposed to pronounce her charming. Fain would he have approached and joined in the conversation; but the dread of appearing over-solicitous imposed a constraint upon his air and actions; till he almost envied the *sang-froid* of his brother, in being able to recommend himself to the good opinion of so beautiful a cousin.

So intent was Julius upon his cogitations, that he was not aware of Lord Storby's withdrawal of his finger from his button, or that he was standing alone with his eyes fixed on Lady Ismena; till he found himself addressed by a strange voice, and perceived that the listless Buchanan had exchanged places with the Viscount, and actually crossed the room to enter into conversation with him.

Had Julius been aware of the importance of the coxcomb befo-

him, in the coterie of which Dick and Adolphus Egerton were the demi-gods, he might have been more grateful for Sir Herbert's civility in bestowing this token of notice upon an obscure individual, carelessly named to him on his entrance by Lord Tiverton. As it was, the effeminacy of his dress and the inanimation of his countenance, disposed the country curate to regard him with pity and contempt, as one of the spangles intermingled with the mud of London. His opinion was changed by the well-bred courtesy with which the stranger announced himself as the brother of his old college friend, Henry Buchanan.

"I had very little idea," said he, in his usual languid drawl, "that I was in the society of 'Egerton of Trinity.' Henry has often boasted to me of his intimacy with the first man of his year; but I confess I did not expect to find the Egerton *he* used to describe, either habited in black or emerging from the sobrieties of rural life."

Julius murmured some commonplace remark about the influence of time and circumstance.

"A miraculous influence, certainly!" replied the dandy; "which, non-content with converting *you* into a country parson, has metamorphosed poor Henry Buchanan from a fox-hunter into a secretary of legation! My brother is now at Stutgardt, or Dresden, or Frankfort, or some of those *pays perdus* where people spend half the year in making *sauer kraut*, and the other half in eating it. It will fill a page of my next despatch to him, that I have had the honour of forming the acquaintance of one whom he so highly values."

Julius replied by more particular inquiries after the particular friend on whom he had never wasted a thought from the moment of quitting Trinity; but Sir Herbert Buchanan had given all the attention he intended to his brother, by using his name as a means of introduction.

"And so you have the happiness of being new to this place, and of having this place new to you?" said he, *subsiding* into a sofa near them, with a gesture that compelled Julius to take a seat by his side.

"I have rarely been in London;—as a matter of pleasure, never," said he, surprised to be thus coolly interrogated.

"Who *is*, as a matter of pleasure!" retorted Sir Herbert. "I question whether the most painstaking of city drudges labours more loathingly at his desk, than we blockheads who, after being snatched up by the sails of the windmill of society, submit to be whirled round in dread of the concussion and giddiness of alighting on *terra firma*. Mrs. Graham's bumpings in her balloon can have been nothing to it!"

"That must depend on the strength of one's grappling-irons," observed Julius, humouring the oddity of his new companion.

"Not exactly on one's own," replied the coxcomb. "Our conduct

and happiness in life depend much more upon the influences which other people are at the trouble of exercising over us, than upon those we exercise over other people."

"The strength or feebleness of resistance still lies in ourselves," argued Julius.

"For my part—for the trouble rather than the morality's sake—I have long voted resistance a bore!" observed Sir Herbert.

"I must not pretend to argue with your experience," Julius was beginning—(when a sparkle in the usually languid eyes of his companion induced him to suspect that he was falling into a snare; that, by a preconcerted scheme with others of the party, Buchanan was forcing him to shew off in moral disputation)—"Still less afford you the satisfaction of playing upon my stops, and making a butt of the country curate! But I adhere to my opinion that, as every district in nature has its poisonous fungi as well as its fairer Flora, so the coteries of London have vices of peculiar growth!—hollowness of heart and hypocrisy, for instance—want of generous impulse—want of honest sympathy—all that is despicable without being appalling—all that leads to the pillory instead of the scaffold.

Buchanan, whose "impulse" in addressing Julius was merely the impertinent affability of wishing to patronise his younger brother's friend, and perhaps some little curiosity to ascertain how far the scholar he had heard so vaunted in former days was superior to the rest of the world, was startled by this sudden outburst. Vexed that he was unable to repress the expression of his surprise, instead of retaining the placid inanimation it was part of the business of his affectation to assume, he saw clearly that young Egerton's sortie had been overheard by others of the party; for Lady Ismena turned her dark eyes towards him, beaming with malicious smiles; while Silas Vivian, though pretending to be engrossed by the volumes of literary frippery adorning the drawing-room table, kept smiling to himself, like Malvolio, at his own conclusions.

"*Tu me le paieras!*" was the dandy's inward ejaculation, as he affected to applaud the energetic eloquence of his new friend. He was determined, however, that Julius at least should not perceive how much he was piqued; and pursued the conversation in a lighter vein till Lady Tiverton's carriage was announced, and the party broke up.

"Neither Henrietta nor I are going to Almack's," said the Earl, as an inducement to his nephews and Mr. Vivian to remain after the departure of the Countess. But as John and Julius seemed little tempted by the announcement, he pressed their hands in token of adieu, exacting a promise that they would see him again before they quitted London.

"What a stupid evening!" exclaimed John Egerton to his

brother, as they walked homeward arm in arm, affecting a yawn of weariness.

Julius made no reply. Though fully as much inclined as his brother to conceal his interest in the scene they were quitting, he was too profoundly absorbed in his own emotions to have leisure for dissimulation.

What a world had begun to develop itself to his eyes, with all its enchantments of splendour, wit, and beauty !—The orgies of his college life afforded him as little precedent as the homely routine of Helstone Parsonage, whereby to regulate his judgment upon such a scene. He knew that the party at Lord Tiverton's was a mere family party, such as produced no impression upon any one present but himself. Yet what elements of enjoyment, what themes for reflection, did it contain for one whose life was unincidental as his own ! The learning and eloquence of Silas Vivian, the quaint oddity of Buchanan, the cheerfulness of Storby, the bewildering beauty of Lady Ismena Egerton, and the feminine elegance of her sister, would severally have imparted a surpassing charm to any previous evening of *his* uneventful life ; yet even when thus united, they created no sensation among persons habituated to the joys of aristocratic existence !

"What a world must it be of which such society is the commonplace ! mused Julius, shuddering at the recollection of aunt Rachel's tedious potter, and the prosy tea-drinkings of Hurley. Already he was spell-bound within the magic circle produced by the refinements of fashion.

"That eldest girl would be handsome enough were she not so affected !" were the first words that struck him from the lips of John, who was still flushed with the delight of having basked in the smiles of the lovely Lady Ismena. "Lady Tiverton herself must have been a fine woman ; but, by Jove, even at Cadiz, I never saw such a pair of ankles and such a pair of eyes as her daughter's !"

"I did not notice them," replied Julius, attempting to speak carelessly. "It is my desire to preserve towards these people the same indifference I am convinced they entertain towards *us*. As to Lord Tiverton, even in his own family he appears a complete nonentity."

"Despise *him* as heartily as you please, my dear fellow ; but in all candour admit that he has handsome daughters and an excellent cook," said John, as they entered the hotel together. "To-morrow, I suppose, we must make what is called abroad, a *visite de digestion* in St. James's Square ?"

"You are at perfect liberty to go," answered Julius coldly ; "but, as far as I am concerned, I wish to see no more of my uncle's family."

"Don't be pragmatical !" cried Captain Egerton, throwing down his hat on the table of their sitting-room. "Let us take the

Tivertons as we find them, both for my father's sake and our own. I am not the dog to bark at shadows."

"You mistake me," cried Julius, hastily, "if you suppose that I stand in awe either of their strength or my own weakness. Could you, on the contrary, imagine the thorough contempt with which"——

"Come, come, come!"—interrupted John Egerton, good-humouredly, "I won't have you wrong yourself by pretending to despise any thing so handsome as Lady Ismena Egerton. I give up my uncle and his two hopeful sons to you. Make footballs of them if you will; but, from this day forward, I institute myself the champion of all womankind bearing the honoured name of Egerton!"

To dispute with the good-humour of his brother was impossible, and John and Julius parted for the night, the former secretly apprehending, from his brother's tone, that the young parson had been playing the pedant, and provoking the derision of the guests at his uncle's table; while the latter was equally alarmed lest the frank familiarity of the Captain should have disgusted the supercilious fastidiousness of his uncle's daughter. Neither of them, alas! was as well satisfied with the other as previous to the inauspicious dinner-party.

On the morrow, the simple plot of their lives seemed thickening. Scarcely was breakfast over, when Lord Storby was with them, proposing plans for their entertainment. He had made up a white-bait dinner for the following day, and they must accompany him to Blackwall; his lordship protesting, that since Julius had twice broken faith with him respecting a visit to the north, he owed him the compensation of his company during his stay in town.

Captain Egerton was eager to accept this cordial invitation, for he fell in readily with the open-hearted friendliness of the Viscount's manners. But Julius was more on his guard. He remembered that it was by a similar show of kindness on the part of his cousin Dick he had been betrayed into the surrender of his regard; and while Lord Storby continued to talk with reckless unreserve of men, women, and things, in their nearest connection with himself and the two Egertons, Julius communicated little in return. Not a word was to be extracted from him touching any member of his uncle's family.

"If you continue to be so close, my dear fellow," cried the Viscount, "I shall begin to have hopes of you, and to fancy you intend applying to old Tiverton for one of his fine livings, instead of keeping the place of all-work in which you are muddling away your intellects."

"You are mistaken," interrupted John Egerton sportively, "Ju's reserve arises solely from pride. Ju is the proudest fellow on earth. He was in a panic yesterday lest I should let fall before

the Tivertons that I am in want of a friendly word at the Horse-Guards.

"I certainly should regret to see you under obligations to one who has behaved so unhandsomely to my father," replied Julius, gravely. "I am wrong, however, in wishing my opinions to influence yours. It is not because I am devoid of ambition, and prefer a narrow domestic circle to the allurements of the gay world, that a man of your profession and temperament is to be compelled to similar sacrifices."

"Certainly not. You have not the smallest pretence for making a saint of your brother; 'tis not *his* vocation, Hal"—cried Storby, good-humouredly. "I was afraid, my dear fellow, you were going to give Buchanan a touch of the velvet cushion last night, when I saw him telegraphing behind your back to Lady Ismena."

"I knew both him and myself better," replied Julius, with rising colour. "Meanwhile, the ill-breeding of Lady Ismena Egerton and her friend serves only to stimulate my contempt of fashionable society, and confirm my love of retirement."

"My dear fellow," argued Lord Storby, presuming upon having Captain Egerton to back his opinion, "there was a foolish time when I used to revere the philosophy of those who prefer a small social circle to what is called the world;—but I am growing wiser. This pretended humility is, in fact, the height of human pride—of human vanity—of human egotism!"

"You handle my foible somewhat roughly," said Julius, mildly.

"To a certain degree"—

He was interrupted. To the surprise of all parties, "Mr. Vivian" was suddenly announced; and Silas, spruce, black, and lustrous, glided into the room. After the usual compliments of the day, he informed Julius Egerton that he had intruded upon him with the view of soliciting a favour; but in a tone of amenity, and with a blandness of countenance, which to Lord Storby, who was better acquainted with his habits, plainly announced that he was come to confer one.

"A friend of mine, the alternate preacher at St. James's, is in family affliction, which renders him most anxious to procure a substitute for Sunday next," said Vivian, addressing his young friend. "Of strict principles and nice discernment, he is naturally difficult in such matters, and would fain tie himself down to the discharge of his duty, had I not promised to obtain your assistance."

"Which I should have been most happy to offer, but for the necessity of returning to Helstone on Saturday for the discharge of my own duty," replied Julius, somewhat embarrassed.

"That difficulty, my dear Sir, is, I am happy to say, obviated," said Silas Vivian, benignly. "Lady Smyth's brother-in-law, my friend, Dr. Lawnly, happens to be on a visit to Helstone Park, and will be gratified to oblige me by taking your duty. In order to

spare your scruples," added Vivian, with a smile, "I have written to him to request the favour in my own name, stating my anxiety that you should confer a similar obligation on another of my friends. I wait only your permission to post my letter," continued he, taking the sealed epistle from his pocket.

"By Jove, my dear fellow, you *must* stay!" cried Lord Storby. "The Fates and Vivian will have it so."

"Certainly, certainly!" added John Egerton, not a little pleased at any pretext for prolonging his visit to the metropolis. "The only obstacle to our spending another week in town is thus removed."

"Many a country curate would give his head for such an opportunity of lifting up his voice among the givers of scarves and stalls!" cried Storby, unable to account for Julius's hesitation, which, in fact, arose from a dread of incurring expenses such as his small allowance and liberal charities rendered it difficult to satisfy. But as this motive remained unsuspected by men to whom the amount of a week's hotel bill was a speck of dust, they overpowered all opposition; and it was settled that the Egertons were to dine with Silas in his snugery in the Albany on the Monday, and to fill up the week with parties of pleasure, rapidly suggested by the Viscount.

"I have given you two days to prepare for your encounter with an auditory forming the very antipodes of the one I had formerly the edification of hearing you address," observed Silas Vivian, in a low voice to Julius, as he shook hands with him at the door at parting. "I need not tell you that your next Sunday's congregation is likely to be composed of much that is eminent in the worlds of fashion, politics, and literature. Look well to your orthodoxy, my dear Sir, for we have two bishops among us; and do honour to the name of Egerton, for Lord Tiverton's pew directly fronts the pulpit."

"I see it is your intention to alarm me," replied Julius, with flushing cheeks and kindling eyes, excited more than he would have cared to acknowledge by the prospects unfolded. "But my courage rises with the occasion. The difficulties you are presenting inspire me with a hope that I may not wholly disgrace your recommendation."

On returning to the window, beside which he had left his companions, he found his brother enlarging warmly upon the friendly spirit in which a comparative stranger had espoused his interests; for it was evident that Vivian had obtained as a golden opportunity what he affected to offer as an occasion of conferring obligation on himself. Lord Storby's remarks were carelessly affirmative. More familiar than Captain Egerton with the character and habits of the man they were discussing, he would not wrong his ingenuousness by encouraging the gratitude of the brothers towards a supposed benefactor. But he was also too well acquaint-

ed with the susceptibility of Julius Egerton to put him out of conceit of his patron, by hinting that it was the vocation in the world of letters of the natty Mæcenas of the Albany, to hunt out obscure prodigies, whether for the pulpit, the bar, or the stage, and obtain notice for himself by puffing them into celebrity. Silas Vivian was the first critic who had favoured Byron; the first who had detected the hand of Scott in the Waverley novels; and more than one popular poet, preacher, and historian, owed to his curious researches an introduction to fashionable celebrity.

On the present occasion, Lord Storby was too eager to co-operate in his efforts to allow himself to quiz the foible of this accredited master of the ceremonies of the Muses; too truly rejoiced at any opening for the display of his young friend's talents to quarrel with the fussy pioneer by whom it had been cleared. He knew that Julius was safe in the hands of Silas Vivian, who was a most active backer of his friends; that the *proneur en titre* would spare no pains to pack and prompt the jury about to pronounce upon the merits and destinies of the St. John of Helstone.

"The game is in his own hands," said his lordship aside to Captain Egerton. "Let us only be careful not to make him nervous by revealing the importance of the stake."

On this hint, Captain Egerton proceeded alone to pay his promised visit in St. James's Square, where, at Storby's suggestion, he announced the prolongation of their stay in town, but nothing wherefore. The whole thing was to be a surprise—Silas Vivian having already expressed his determination not to forewarn the Earl.

"You must come to us this evening," was almost the first sentence addressed to him by Lord Tiverton. "There is so little going on, that my daughters have made up a little impromptu concert to-night, which will afford me an opportunity of presenting you to a few of my friends. We shall expect you both soon after ten."

Julius Egerton could scarcely forgive himself the flurry of spirits into which he was thrown by the prospects thus suddenly developed.

Still he felt the importance of his vocation as he had never felt it before; and in proportion to the excitement of his feelings, became the elevation of his soul. In the stillness of his chamber, the object of his labours gradually faded from his recollection as the subject took possession of his mind; and the excessive effort by which he tried to master his subject enabled his subject to overmaster *him*, till inspiration touched his lips with fire, and he spake as with the tongue of men and angels. Before night he was fully prepared. He could not deliberate—he would not take thought. Like every other sublime effort of genius, his work was struck off at a heat.

At his earnest request, he had been excused from Lord Storby's

Blackwall dinner-party; but his brother exacted that he should attend him to St. James's Square. Julius would fain have got off this engagement; for the occupation in which he had been recently engrossed, disinclined him to mingle in a crowd of the vain and frivolous. But Storby and John Egerton were implacable; and he met them at the appointed hour in Lady Tiverton's drawing-room, his cheeks still glowing, and his countenance intellectualized by the mood into which he had wrought himself. His timidity of manner and reserve of aspect seemed to have inexplicably disappeared. The nothingness of earthly distinctions was at that moment so vivid before his eyes, as to loosen all ties of conventional bondage. The gilded saloon was only a gilded saloon—Lady Ismena Egerton only a handsome girl of unamiable deportment. Julius Egerton would have been as little moved just then by detecting her sneering at him with Sir Herbert Buchanan, as he was to find her welcome him with the warmest kindness.

"Are you fond of music? Pray join our party near the piano," said she. And though Julius did not suspect that he was thus favoured in order to form an attraction to Lord Storby, he was wholly indifferent to her notice.

He was even able to meet with perfect equanimity the advances of Dick Egerton; though the manner in which his fashionable cousin, deserting for a moment the side of a beautiful woman by whom he was lounging on an ottoman, welcomed him to his father's house, was such as might have overcome the mistrust of a more suspicious mind.

"It is most unkind of you, my dear Julius, to have left me to learn by accident your arrival in town," said Dick, with the utmost *empressement*. "You must be aware of my anxiety to thank you for the hospitality shewn me last year by your family, as well as of my desire to be presented to Captain Egerton." And he immediately performed his part in the inevitable introduction with so much seeming warmth, that John Egerton was delighted. Had aunt Rachel been present, she would have pronounced the Honourable Richard Egerton Egerton to be a redresser of the long-smarting grievances of the Hurley family.

Neither aunt Rachel nor her nephews could be aware, that Dick Egerton had just been undergoing a severe lecture from his father touching his intimacy with the Vassylls, or rather, touching its influence upon his political reputation. Lord Tiverton's threat of breaking of all connection between his family and the people at West Hill had, in fact, so alarmed his son as to the inquiries this sudden breach might provoke on the part of the injured husband, that he was ready to make any sacrifice for a modification of his father's determination. The dread of an *éclaircissement*—of having his "idolized Anna" thrown upon his hands, and his prospects in public life ruined by so unlucky an *exposé*, placed him completely at Lord Tiverton's disposal; and

papers have been hinting these two months past, and printing for one."

"Their hinting or printing does not enlighten *me*," observed Julius. "I never see a Sunday paper."

"Do you mean, then, that even that excellent maiden aunt to whom you introduced me at Helstone, and who seemed so well versed in matters of scandal, never whispered a shocking story about Dick Egerton and a certain Mrs. Vassyll?"

"Vassyll?—*That* was the name of the beautiful woman to whom Lady Ismena presented me to-night!" cried John Egerton, laying down his cigar.

"The name and the nature," replied Lord Storby, coolly.

"But her husband was with her;—the grave, intelligent-looking man, Ju, who was discussing the New Poor-Law so vehemently with you and my uncle."

"Ay, ay, exactly!—Vassyll is one of those who are too vehemently interested in the affairs of the public to take proper heed of their own. He is probably the only fellow in town not aware that the name of his wife is disgracefully coupled with that of Dicky Edge."

"With the exception, of course, of my uncle?"

"No such thing!—Lord Tiverton understands the whole affair as well as I do!"

"Impossible!—Mrs. Vassyll is on the most intimate terms with his daughters."

"How can it be otherwise?—They are country neighbours, and Lord Tiverton has no alternative. He knows the world too well to be the first to fling a stone at Mrs. Vassyll, which would carry ruin, *par ricochet*, to the prospects of Dick Egerton."

"Knows the world!" reiterated Captain Egerton in a tone of disgust. "And pray are Lady Tiverton and her daughter *equally* sagacious?"

"I never presume to surmise the extent of a lady's comprehension," replied Storby, gaily. "But this I can assure you, that two months ago, when I was more in Lady Ismena's good graces (or, why not the naked truth—when she had more hopes of nailing me than now), she was constantly tormenting me to use my influence with her brother to break off his connection with the Vassylls."

"That was, at least, some proof of principle," gravely interposed Julius.

"Of principle?" retorted Lord Storby, with an uncontrollable burst of laughter. "Do you suppose it was the immorality of the case that distressed her? Not a bit!—She complained that her brother was forfeiting caste by playing the fool with a woman out of the pale of the fashionable world. She assured me it was most painful to Dick Egerton's family to see him *encanailé* among people never heard of in society!"

"I do not wonder she has lost all hope of nailing you," cried Captain Egerton, with indignation. "Lamentable enough, though, that so fine a girl should have been thus infamously brought up. She is certainly very handsome. But what says the little demure sister to it all?"

"Nothing!—In the first place, because she has nothing to say; in the second, because, if she had, Lady Ismena would allow no one to listen to it."

"You are mistaken on both points," observed Julius, calmly. "I had a great deal of conversation to-night with Lady Henrietta, who is far the most conversable person of the family."

"My dear fellow, you are proclaiming your own insignificance," cried Lord Storby. "Had Lady Ismena thought you worth a moment's consideration, she would not have allowed you a glimpse of her sister, any more than Lady Tiverton of her daughter, had she conceived you to be a dangerous man."

"I am content to sail in the north of their ladyships' opinions," replied Julius, "so long as it secures me access to my younger cousin, who appears a natural, unassuming girl."

"Poor child!—One scarcely knows what she is—she is so kept down in the family," said Storby, carelessly. "She was presented at the last drawing-room, and is by way of being out; yet I have not met her at a single ball."

"Lady Henrietta is not fond of dancing—her health is delicate, and she is afraid of hot rooms," observed Julius.

"Why, my dear fellow, you have actually insinuated yourself into her confidence!" cried Storby, in a bantering tone. "Ay, ay—I recollect the Eastwick heiress hinting to me that, in your quiet way, you were a bit of a rogue."

This observation, though made at random, with the view of provoking a rejoinder from Julius, brought the colour to the cheek of his brother.

"Julius, too, who pretends to be so shy and diffident among women," added Captain Egerton, in a tone of pique—"Julius, who affects to have lived the life of a hermit, in ignorance of the very forms of society, to turn out so insinuating!"

"Politeness is no very difficult task towards those who have claims on our good-will," replied Julius Egerton, gravely. "As I once heard Georgiana Heseltine quote from a French author—*'la politesse est l'art de rendre à chacun sans effort ce qui lui est socialement dû.'*"

"I don't understand French," said the Captain, doggedly.

"A sign among others that you were brought up at a public school," cried Storby, laughing. "I remember cursing Harrow from the bottom of my soul when I first got among the *figurantes*, and had not a word to say for myself. Thank heaven! I have lived to improve my mind, and am now almost on a par with my valet. Going already!—come, come!—another cigar. We have

not heard half that my friend Ju has got to tell us about Lady Henrietta and his new edition of Chesterfield."

But the Egertons insisted on the lateness of the hour. Both were eager to be alone. For the first time thoughts had entered their heads, over which each preferred ruminating in solitude.

A proud man was Silas Vivian when, on the following Sunday, he beheld certain men of established renown in "Clubland—glorious land!"—strive towards the vestry, as Julius Egerton made his way thither from the pulpit—some to shake hands with him—some to ask an introduction—some for the mere satisfaction of catching a nearer view of his face.

He had carried away his auditory. Not the most enthusiastic congregation of the Lock Chapel was ever more wildly absorbed by the mysticism of its favourite dervises, than the more rational assemblage at St. James's by the energetic and argumentative discourse of Julius Egerton.

The congregation, however, was of no ordinary calibre; all that was illustrious in the fashionable and literary world as before gathered together by the painstaking of the professional lion-catcher; who had spent the three preceding days in whispering from house to house the announcement of a new star in the firmament of the ecclesiastical world. And now, Silas Vivian, in his glory, was descried fussing along the aisles, from earl to duke—from Edinburgh reviewer to editor of the Times—inquiring "whether he had said too much;" and whether "the young man was not likely to make a figure?"—Reverend heads were seen nodding in pairs towards the church door, discussing the orthodoxy of the new preacher—"hinting faults," yet not in a single instance "hesitating dislike." Every heart was with Julius, because it was easy to discern that *his* heart was in his subject.

The hearts *most* with him, however, were those of the two friends with whom he made his hasty exit from the vestry door, and walked arm in arm along Jermyn Street—his brother and Lord Storby.

"I am no great judge of such matters—but it was the most convincing sermon I ever heard in my life," cried the latter; while the former pressed the arm of Julius in silence, and said nothing. Both the word and the deed, however, were lost upon Julius. His soul was still wrapt in the impulses of inspiration. He saw not the throng which admiringly gave way before him—the old who gazed at him reverentially through their spectacles, or the young who plucked each other by the sleeve to note him as he passed. He conjectured not of the criticisms of which he was the theme, or the infatuation of which he was about to become the object. His frame of mind was sanctified by his recent discharge of duty. He was once more the St. John of Helstone Parsonage.

It was with some reluctance that Lord Storby and Captain Egerton complied with his request to be left alone at the hotel;

for though both were enchanted at the prospect of his becoming a popular preacher, neither of them desired to see him gird on too closely the insignia of his profession. They thought it possible for a man to be enthusiastic in the pulpit and lukewarm in all beside; eager in instruction, cool in example; for *they* looked upon the church simply as a profession.

His brother had at least the satisfaction of gathering throughout the day, and bringing home on his return at night from a dinner with Storby at the Clarendon, golden opinions from all sorts of men touching his performance.

"You have made a sensation," cried he. "As to the Tivertons, nothing can exceed their enthusiasm. Some prelate or other (I forget exactly whom) called upon the Earl immediately after church to inquire whether you belonged to his lordship's family;—and when I made my appearance in St. James's Square, a whole tribe of them were discussing you. That Lord de Vaux, whom we met there the other night, and who *then* did not condescend to notice you, was good enough to recollect of a sudden that he had been at college with you. Then came the history of the wrangler-ship, and all the rest of it;—yet my uncle did not seem to consider it reflected disgrace upon him that it should have been so long forgotten. Dick Egerton made his appearance before I came away. He told me that, though no church-goer, he would certainly have paid you the compliment of attending, had he been aware that you were about to preach."

"Paid *me* the compliment!" ejaculated Julius.

"But though not so lucky as to hear your sermon, he told me that the fame of it had already reached the Clubs, and that he had left all Arthur's discussing you."

Julius Egerton shrugged his shoulders.

"I think I saw Lady Tiverton and her daughters in the pew with my uncle?" observed he, interrogatively.

"Yes;—Storby said so much on the subject last night at the Opera, that Lady Ismena could not decently keep away. To please *him*, I am convinced she would frequent an anabaptist's meeting!"

"But Lady Henrietta?—Over Lady Henrietta, at least, Storby has no influence; for she betrayed some wonder to me at my having formed a friendship with so versatile and inconsistent a person."

"She resents, perhaps, his having thrown over her sister. Storby admits having been desperately in love with Lady Ismena the first three weeks of their acquaintance."

"If Lady Henrietta went to hear me this morning, it was of her own accord," observed Julius, returning to the charge.

"Certainly, I rather think I saw her at church, sitting behind her sister. But she made no remark on the subject. She was chatting and laughing with Sir Herbert Buchanan, while the rest

of them surrounded me. I did not, of course, care to ascertain her opinion ; for people in and out of the house seem unanimous in considering her of no manner of consequence."

Chatting and laughing with Sir Herbert Buchanan !—Perhaps laughing at him, or, at all events, indifferent to his triumph ! Already poor Julius's sense of personal importance was diminishing. Since the gradual exhaustion of the morning's excitement, the reaction of human vanity had commenced, and, like all persons unaccustomed to popular plaudits, he had fancied that they were to last for ever—increasing rather than diminishing ; and that no other topic would at present interfere with the praises reported to him by his friends. The delusion was delightful ; for there were those whom Julius was beginning to sigh to please, as well as those whom he had lately burned to mortify. But, alas, it appeared that of the latter, Dick Egerton had not deigned to be a witness of his success, and that Dick Egerton's fair sister had already forgotten it !

No matter ! On the morrow he was to dine with Vivian—Vivian, his patron, *proneur*, protector ;—from him, at least, he should hear enough of it. Vivian had promised that a chosen few of the celebrities of the day should assemble at his board ; and among *them* the subject would be duly discussed—his arguments re-argued—his orthodoxy examined—his opinions reviewed—his triumph established. From *them* he should learn the award of the two bishops, and all the other learned pundits gathered together at St. James's by the ringing in of Silas Vivian.

Vivian had already apprized them that, of the four strangers who, with themselves and Storby, were to constitute the sacred eight, the stint of his select and far-famed dinner-parties, one was, like the host, a reviewer of renown ; one, as Julius had formerly aspired to be, a popular poet ; the third, a political notability, unseated by a recent election ; and the fourth, a retired ambassador, wearing the garter in preference to the seven-and-thirty other European orders with which he was entitled to variegate his sober suit of citizenship.

Punctual to a moment, like men who have ulterior duties to perform, they sat down to dinner with scarcely more than time for a slight bow on their introduction to the young strangers ; and immediately began talking and eating with a volubility and activity characteristic of full heads and empty stomachs. Each had his story to tell, to which no one listened but the two Egertons ; and, so far from dwelling upon yesterday's sermon, they were all vehement in the discussion of an exhibition opened that morning in Regent Street—viz, Altieri's tragedy of "*Bruto Secondo*," performed by canary birds ! Five minutes were occupied in deciding whether the philosopher by whom the luckless birds had been trained, were an Hungarian, or a Saxon, or from Como ; five more, in discussing whether the feathered performers were the

identical canary-birds who, some years before, had acted the "Deserter," at an exhibition in St. James's Street. The Egertons were appealed to for their opinion. They had none to give. They had not seen either company. They had not courage to avow that they had never heard of them!

"Go! bless my soul! *not* seen the learned canaries!" exclaimed Silas Vivian, almost ashamed of his young friends. "Nothing else was talked of yesterday at the clubs! All the world was there this morning—*un monde fou*! They must have taken hundreds of pounds at the doors. The Duke of A—— was on one of the front benches quite in raptures, applauding every scene—I never saw such enthusiasm! I told the *entrepreneur*, Herr Dromistitsch, or whatever his name may be, that he ought to give a series of these entertainments—I am convinced they would succeed."

"I remember some years ago, when I was on that extraordinary mission to Denmark, there was a fellow in Copenhagen who had taught half-a-dozen starlings to recite the principal scenes in Oehlenschläger's plays. A most interesting exhibition it was!" observed the ex-ambassador, casting a wistful glance towards a haunch on which Silas Vivian was just then inflicting a most unclassical gash.

"There is an account (in Pliny, I think, but I scarcely know where) of a starling kept by the Empress Antonina, which used to mimic the harangues of the orators in vogue," said the popular poet, helping himself largely to sweet sauce. But when Julius Egerton mildly set him right as to his authority, he was whispering an inquiry of the butler for French beans.

"I was in hopes of persuading Pelham to meet you," observed Vivian, addressing the ex-member, *à propos* to this little by-bit of classicality. "But there is no getting him on Mondays."

"Why, what is before the house to-night?" inquired the unseated patriot, without taking his eyes from his plate.

"Nothing that need have kept him away—the Irish question, but merely an adjournable debate. There will be no division—no possible reason why he might not have joined us. Roarem's speech will detain the house till ten or eleven—then comes Boreham, a good two hours' work. Flynych's reply will probably last till one in the morning;—and then there is the new member for Swampford, who is expected to make a flash speech, that may go on till God knows when. Pelham has no opening till late to-morrow, and might just as well have dined with us."

"What o'clock is the new member likely to be on his legs?" inquired Spondee. "My friend Blaze, of the Morning Star, has an article to get up on his speech; and I have a gallery order, with a promise of giving him my opinion."

"We will go together, then, after L——house," said Vivian, nodding to him. "The young fellow is my friend Lord Wheatear's

second cousin, and we are doing our best to froth him a little. There is a monstrous good opening for him if he stands fire as they promise. We shall see to-night how he gets over the stage fright. It is amazing the effect of the first cough on a lad of that kind, fresh from his study, and new to the bad manners of the house. A transition from the lamp to the lamps is the very devil ! ”

“ On second thoughts, I am afraid I cannot go with you,” observed Spondee. “ I forgot Lady Birmingham’s supper-party.”

“ Still boring on with that horrid woman ? ” cried Lord Storby, chiming in. “ Dick Egerton and I were positively under the care of an aurist a whole month last season—talked deaf by Lady Birmingham’s *soirées* ! ”

“ One can’t be always apologizing,” observed Spondee, in self-defence. “ I lie myself to perdition with pretexts for not reading her novels ; and of two evils, choose the supper-parties as the less. Besides, one meets every body at her house—flogged in, perhaps, like myself, by eternal billets of invitation ; but *there* they are ! ”

“ And there, too, are certain eulogistic stanzas in her ladyship’s album, convicting you in black and white as an arch traitor ! ” said Silas Vivian, with polite contempt.

“ Come, come ! ” remonstrated Spondee, “ these qualms of conscience sit well upon Master Silas, who, after reviewing last year the ‘ last charming production of the Aspasia of the day,’ went about the whole season calling her the Cat-o’-nine-tales.”

A laugh and some excellent hock went round together, while Julius sat amazed. Levity was the first epithet that suggested itself to his mind—treachery the second. Silas Vivian had perhaps already applied to *him* some equally ear-catching *sobriquet*. Meanwhile, the K.G., who was as slow of apprehension as if jokes, like despatches, were delayed on the road by official formality—began to discover that they were no longer talking of the canaries.

“ Cat-o’-nine-tales ?—oh ! ay, poor Lady Birmingham ! ” said he. “ Certainly that Lady Birmingham *is* a most preserving person. When I was in office, she used to write me ten letters a week, without including invitations ; but the very day after we went out, her ladyship dropped her usual ‘ My dear Lord D——,’ and presented me her compliments ; to which I mean to keep her, for I have never since entered her house. I fancy most people are finding her out—she has gone down amazingly the last few seasons.”

“ Who does *not* ? ” ejaculated the ex-member, with a sigh.

“ Better drop the supper-party, you see, my dear Spondee,” cried Lord Storby, provokingly ; “ neither honour nor glory to be obtained there ! Besides, the bleating of your lambs and purling of your rills wont go down with Lady Birmingham now-a-days. She has enlisted in the horrific school ; and the top-sawyer at her *soirées* is the fellow who gets up the spasmodic ‘novettes in the —— Magazine.’ ”

"Exactly!—The last time I was there, her ladyship amused us by holding forth upon the difference between primitive poetry and the poetry of civilisation," said the reviewer, looking as if he had swallowed an ounce of assafoetida.

"What did she mean?" inquired Silas Vivian, laughing.

"Deuce take *me* if I know!" replied the reviewer, in the same tone. And Julius Egerton was new enough to attempt the enlightenment of the two old traitors, by explaining the poetry of civilisation as a transcript of the pangs or pleasures of the soul in its social condition, as opposed to the poetry deducible from inanimate nature.

The reviewer bowed politely, and smiled a smile of gentlemanly non-conviction; but Silas Vivian could have brained his *protégé* for having so little tact as to spoil a joke by placing a dot over the *i*'s of the matter they had affected to misunderstand. He saw that Julius might achieve reputation as a preacher, but never as a talker; and was sorry to perceive that so much talent was likely to be what *he*, the diner-out, considered thrown out of the market.

Julius, meanwhile, regretted to find the conversation, which he had hoped was about to take a literary turn, become gradually so warmed by the fumes of Champagne and Burgundy, that the jests, at first confined to his brother, Lord Storby, and the K.G., soon became general. Stories grew as broad as they were long, and jokes ensued, of which, like a gauger's stick, the point was invariably dirty! He was amazed to hear greybearded men talk so much like school-boys!—Silas Vivian seemed to have forgotten his presence, or he would have checked the licence of his guests.

But when, at length, the party, after growing boozy and talking itself sober again, broke up in order to enable several of those present to go and listen to the debates at L— House, and the division at the Commons, Julius was destined to experience a still further shock. As they successively received their hats from the butler, he stood aghast on discovering the reviewer's to be a shovel! Silas Vivian had only pointed him out in a whisper to young Egerton on entering, by his highest title, "the author of that celebrated critique upon Pepys's Diary." He now named him apart to the astonished young divine as both honourable and very reverend; and Julius instantly recognised a name of some notoriety in the church, as appended to certain politico-ecclesiastical pamphlets and polemical treatises. He felt inexpressibly humbled. He felt both himself and the national church degraded by the fact, that when dining in company with a man so prominent, the least objectionable part of the conversation should have consisted in a discussion upon learned canary birds.

"Come, come! own yourself mortified at finding that in four-and-twenty hours you have outlived your immortality!" cried

Lord Storby, on overhearing, on their way home, the indignant murmurs addressed by Julius to Captain Egerton. "You expected in Vivian a more discriminating patron, eh?—My dear fellow, you don't know him as well as I do! Provided he be allowed to shine as *la queue de la comète*, Vivian cares very little whether the meteor of the hour be a popular preacher or a canary bird. By the way, you must positively look in with me at Lady Birmingham's for a minute. I want to go and see whether Spondee ventures there after our badgering."

"Look in at the Cat-o'-nine-tails?" cried Captain Egerton. "Many thanks!"

"Nonsense, nonsense, my dear fellow! Her house is one of the pleasantest in town, and *de très bonne compagnie* for a single man. I assure you, she is an invaluable acquaintance. If you are worth serving, she will be your humble servant; and in whatever way you stand in need of assistance—to canvass for a fashionable club, or get your pamphlet reviewed, or speech reported in the Times—she will write all your circulars as readily as one of Wedgewood's polygraphs."

"But we are neither of us worth serving," cried the Captain; "and I have a holy hatred of the whole *bureaucratie d'esprit*. I had fifty times rather turn in and smoke another cigar with you."

"Done, done! with all my heart!" cried the Viscount, pulling the check-string of his chariot; and as one of Miss Edgeworth's incomparable Irish heroes observes—"Done, and done's enough between two jontlemen!"

CHAPTER VI.

MY UNCLE THE DUKE.

JULIUS EGERTON retired to rest, harassed and sore, like a man suffering from the effects of a fall. Unaware how quickly sensations succeed each other in London society, he had not prepared himself to find his laurels wither thus quickly; though the examples of Scott and Byron might have convinced him, that it is only by a series of strong impressions on the public mind, a modern reputation can be established.

But it was not alone the discovery of his personal insignificance that distressed him; it was to find himself still so susceptible to the acclamations or indifference of the world. Recent habits had imparted to his mind the devotional tendencies originally wanting; nay, he had been beginning to flatter himself that the constant contemplation of things spiritual had weaned him from the vanities of life.

The discovery of his weakness was at once a surprise and a

mortification. He despised himself for the readiness with which his ear had been charmed by the voice of the charmer ; for the levity with which he was surrendering himself to the society of the vain and frivolous. He could not disguise from himself his satisfaction in being made much of by his fair cousins at Tiverton House ; or in being assured by such men as Silas Vivian or the Earl of Dunderhead, that he required only confidence in himself to become one of the first spiritual teachers of the age. "And yet I entertain no respect for the opinion of these people," murmured Julius, as he mused on his uneasy pillow. "Vivian and the old diplomat were just as enthusiastic in the praise of the learned canaries as of my eloquence ; and as to Lady Ismena and her sister, no doubt they exchange with other confederates besides that ass Buchanan, gestures of compassion for my rusticity. There is nothing honest or wholesome in their sayings or doings ! No, no ; John may wear out the week among them if he chooses ; but to-morrow I am off for Helstone !"

But though Julius awoke in the morning steadfast in the determination produced by the moralizing mood of the preceding night, so trifling a matter as a letter by the post was destined to frustrate his philosophy. Aunt Rachel, on learning from Dr. Lawnly the prolongation of her nephew's visit to town, hastened to entreat that he would profit by the opportunity to wait upon the Duke of Pelham ; *not* as his kinsman, but as patron of the living of Helstone, to modify his grace's decree in some tithe-proctor's squabble, influencing the interests both of the rector and his parishioners ; and though from such an interference Julius would gladly have refrained, Miss Spry presented the case to his conscience in so urgent a point of view, that he felt it impossible to refuse.

"I am sure you will be gratified to hear, my dear nephew," wrote aunt Rachel, "that both myself and your grandfather are in better health than when you left us. The camomile-tea has done wonders for my digestion ; and, please God, I hope, as a reward for all my self-denial, I shall be able to breakfast once more on a hot roll and a new-laid egg before summer is over. The parish of Helstone is and ought to be your peculiar care ; I consider it highly incumbent upon you to seize the present opportunity of referring to the Duke of Pelham the tithe question about Willand's Farm, which you always fancied could not be sufficiently explained by letter, and which, in justice to your grandfather, yourself, and all future rectors of Helstone, ought to be settled during his grace's lifetime ; which reminds me that the little girl for which you lately churched Tom Higgins's wife has taken the measles, and, being a seven months' child, is not likely to get over it ; but if, please God, it should die, you need not make yourself uneasy, for Dr. Lawnly has been vastly obliging in offering to do any little matter of that kind for us ; but, as I said before, if the Duke of

Pelham could be persuaded to make the small concession required by old Willand, the question would be set at rest without a suit both expensive and disagreeable to all parties ; and I really think it is the least his grace can do for your poor grandfather, considering the devotion of the Doctor's best days to the Pelham family, to say nothing of the services of your late poor dear grandmamma ; and pray bear in mind, my dear Julius, in your interview with the Duke, that his grace is a nobleman of the old school, accustomed to the utmost punctilio of respect ; for I have heard my late poor dear mother relate, that at the period she lived so much with the Prince, it was the custom of his royal highness to say, that ' Pelham might take what liberties he liked with *him*, but that *he* could not presume to take liberties with the Duke of Pelham.' On referring this morning to Debrett, I find that the Duke is now in his seventy-third year ; that is, seventeen years younger than your poor dear grandfather. Be sure not to lose a moment's time in waiting upon the Duke, or obtaining an appointment to see his grace ; as I must say I shall consider it rather extraordinary if you allow any thing to interfere with your engagement of returning hither on Friday next, so as to prepare properly for your Sunday duties ; being, my dear Julius, your affectionate aunt and well-wisher,

" RACHEL SPRY.

" *HELSTONE PARSONAGE, Saturday, July 14th.*"

The injunctions contained in this diffuse epistle so far prevailed, that before noon Julius Egerton had ascertained that the Duke of Pelham was out of town ; but as the civil old porter of his grace's old-fashioned residence in Spring Gardens was courteous enough to add, that the Duke was only at his villa at Roehampton, his usual summer residence, it became poor Egerton's duty to proceed thither in the course of the day ; and Lord Storby, having several horses idle in his stable, mounted him for the expedition.

Of the Duke of Pelham, Julius Egerton knew little more than that he was the brother of the late Countess of Tiverton, who had sent Dr. Spry to Helstone, and his father to Coventry. Aunt Rachel often described him as a great beau in his youth—a great whister in his maturity—and a great valetudinarian in his old age—no uncommon progress in men of his rank possessed of moderate capacities and ample means.

Of this unknown uncle, Julius entertained an involuntary awe, as the fountain-head of his own fortunes—the patron of the living of Helstone.

It was a brilliant summer day ; and Julius, as he rode up to the portico, was dazzled by the excessive whiteness of the freestone. Two burnished footmen, resplendent with plush and gilt buttons, followed by a stuffy butler, instantly made their appearance. " His grace was at home, but could receive no one. His grace was at luncheon ; after which, he had to see Dr. Snape ;

after which, the carriage would be at the door for his grace's daily airing."

The portly gentleman in blue and buff by whom this information was vouchsafed, condescended, however, at Julius's request, to take in his name to the Duke; and, as he prudently forbore to add a request for an audience on business, the announcement of an Egerton of whom his grace knew nothing, probably excited some curiosity in the old gentleman's mind; for the visiter was instantly admitted. As he entered a morning room, into which streamed the full effulgence of a July sun, the visiter overheard a querimonious voice observing to the servant by whom he was ushered in—"You mentioned, I hope, Skinner, that I am expecting Dr. Snape, and have only five minutes at my disposal?"

While the Duke was comforted by an answer in the affirmative, Julius, slowly advancing, surveyed the spare, prim-looking, old gentleman, whose white hairs were minutely frizzed, whose stock was firmly buckled, and whose whole toilet was scrupulously got up. His cadaverous complexion and tremulous hand announced want of health; his narrow brows and contracted countenance, want of intellect; and his frigid bow, from the easy-chair in which he always sat upright as a sentry, gave some indication of want of heart. Julius Egerton decided in a moment that he was cold, proud, peevish, and reserved.

Curiosity to learn the object of an authorized visit was so plainly painted in his grace's looks, that, on taking the seat into which he was motioned, Julius stated without further preamble that he was one of the sons of his grace's nephew, Mr. William Egerton, and curate of his grace's living of Helstone; on receiving which information, the Duke bowed more stiffly than before, and with still more marked astonishment at the compliment vouchsafed him. But when, encouraged by his silence, the young man went on to state that the object of his ride to Roehampton was the desire of compromising a tithe suit about to commence between the rector and one of his grace's tenants, the narrow brow grew more and more contracted, and the tremulous hand began to shake with impatience as well as nervousness. Yet the Duke said nothing. Too big for words was his indignation, that any one should presume to trouble so great a man and so poor an invalid, about any matter so pitiful as the management of his church property.

At length Julius ceased to speak, and the Duke to chafe. "You will have the goodness, Sir, to refer the matter to Mr. Mere-wether," said he. "I do not interfere in business of this nature. Business of this nature rests with my man of business. You really must excuse me, Sir. At no time of my life did I ever enter into discussions of such a kind; and now I am much too infirm to be troubled even with the concerns in which I feel an interest. You must really excuse me, Sir. I beg to refer you to

Mr. Merewether, 34, Soho Square—my professional agent, a man of the highest eminence, Sir—I say, I must beg to refer you to Mr. Merewether.”

“Unfortunately, I have long been in correspondence with Mr. Merewether on the subject,” replied Julius. “Dr. Spry’s misunderstandings with that gentleman are, in fact, the cause of my having ventured to trouble your grace.”

“I am exceedingly sorry, Sir. Whatever Mr. Merewether’s view of the case may be, is with me decisive. Mr. Merewether is my confidential adviser. Mr. Merewether has the sole regulation of my church property.”

“Still I am in hopes that if your grace could afford me five minutes’ patience for the explanation of”——

“At *my* time of life, and in *my* feeble condition, Sir, I really cannot be harassed by any discussion of the sort. I am happy to see you here, Mr. Egerton, as a connection of my family; but, if you persist in making it a visit of business, I must take the liberty of wishing you good-morning.”

Julius was about to start up and take an abrupt leave; when the recollection that a little forbearance might perhaps compass his object, enabled him to reply with becoming respect, when the fretful old man proceeded to make inquiries touching his father.

“Is William Egerton in town? I have not seen him these five-and-twenty years,” said the Duke.

“My father did himself the honour of waiting on your grace in London to present me to your notice eight years ago, when you were so kind as to promise the next presentation to the living of Helstone. An indisposition prevented your grace from receiving us.”

“The next presentation! Oh! *you* are the young man who—humph! And you now officiate as curate to your—your maternal grandfather?”

“To your grace’s tutor, Dr. Spry,” replied Julius, firmly.

The Duke of Pelham winced—perhaps from a twinge of incipient gout; for he had passed his hand coaxingly over a well-varnished shoe.

“I am surprised that Dr. Spry, who is so well acquainted with my habits, should not have apprized you, Sir, that in all matters of business I am governed by the opinions of Mr. Merewether!”

“My grandfather is old.” Julius longed to add, “and obstinate as yourself.”

“Did I understand right, that you had taken the trouble of coming up to town exclusively about this foolish business?” contemptuously demanded the Duke.

“I would have willingly done so, my Lord, could any exertion of mine have placed it in a happier train of settlement,” was the reply. “But I came to accompany my brother, Captain Egerton, who, having recently returned from foreign service, had business the Horse-Guards.”

"A brother older than yourself?" inquired the Duke, struck, now that his irritation was subsiding, by the good appearance of Julius, and a certain air of family resemblance.

"A year older, my Lord."

"You have, of course, seen Lord Tiverton?"

"We dined some days ago in St. James's Square."

"The misunderstanding between your father and his family is cleared up, then?"

"There has been no misunderstanding that I know of. My father is an indolent man, fond of home and averse to London; but he has a strong affection for his family."

The Duke knitted his brows, as if trying to remember what it was he had heard from his nephew Tiverton concerning William Egerton's ingratitude.

"Lord Tiverton placed my brother in the army," observed Julius, "who has done honour to my uncle's recommendation."

"Lord Egerton never mentioned these boys to me!" mused the Duke, thinking aloud. "I never recollect hearing their names from Egerton."

"Neither my brother nor myself have the honour of Lord Egerton's acquaintance," observed Julius, indiscreetly. "We have not yet met him in St. James's Square."

"Probably *not*—his habits are very different from those of his family," observed the Duke. "Lord Egerton is a superior young man."

"I had understood that his abilities were scarcely equal to those of his brother!" said the presumptuous curate.

"I was not speaking of his abilities. Mr. Richard Egerton, I am told, is a very showy personage; but I really know nothing about him. My elder nephew, I am proud to say, I am acquainted with, as a young man keenly alive to the duties of his station. Lord Egerton is perfectly well-bred—perfectly correct in habits and deportment;—an honour, Sir, to his family."

Julius bowed, and looked convinced.

"I have every reason to be grateful for his attention!" resumed the Duke, in a pathetic tone. "At *my* time of life—and in *my* infirm condition—I should feel my residence here very lonely, but that Egerton never allows a week to pass without sleeping here, and scarcely a day without letting me hear from. It is true, he is the nearest to me in blood of any of my surviving relations."—(It occurred at that moment to Julius, that Lord Egerton stood exactly in the same degree of consanguinity to the Duke as himself.)—"But many sons are less respectfully devoted to their parents than that young man to me. I often think that, if any thing could have reconciled me to marriage at an earlier period of life, it would have been the hope of having such a son as my Lord Egerton succeed to my honours!"

Julius had occasionally heard it recited from Debrett, and be-

wailed by aunt Rachel, that, on the demise of the old bachelor, the dukedom would become extinct, and the marquissate descend to a distant cousin, to whom his grace was not likely to bequeath an acre of his estates. But it had never till that moment occurred to him to conjecture to *whom* the Pelham property was likely to devolve, with all its privilege of patronage and preferment.

"Merewether protests," resumed his grace, while a self-complacent smile illumined his sickly features, "that Egerton seems more my son than that of his own father! Of all the grandchildren of my late sister, the Countess, he certainly most resembles her—and Lady Alicia and I were always accounted vastly alike. I am expecting Egerton down here this evening," he continued, looking at the clock. "It is a great comfort to me to have his visits to look forward to. Egerton brings me the London news—the chat of the clubs; and, when Snape is able to drop in, sometimes indulges me with a rubber. Egerton plays a capital game—with a single exception, the very best in London. I have the highest opinion of his judgment."

Seeing the Duke in such good-humour, Julius hazarded another attempt in favour of the Helstonians. "If his grace, to avoid trouble, would permit him to wait upon Lord Egerton on the subject upon which he had ventured to address him?"

"Harass my nephew with a tithe question!" cried his grace. "Lord Egerton, whose time and attention are engrossed by such an infinity of engagements?—I beg you will not think of it! I should be sorry he imagined that I allowed myself to encroach on his time. On the subject in question, I must once more refer you, Sir, to Mr. Merewether;—once for all, I refer you to Merewether. Skinner!" cried his grace, interrupting himself to address the spruce gentleman in waiting, who appeared to answer the bell he had hastily rung—"Pray, did I not hear Dr. Snape's voice in the vestibule?"

Skinner's answer was in the negative; but he took the opportunity of tendering on a massive salver the afternoon draught he fancied he had been summoned to administer; and Julius waited only the close of the discussion that arose between them touching the quantity of the potion, to make his parting bow, after so marked a hint of dismissal.

"I can assure your grace that Dr. Snape desired it might be diluted with barley water," persisted the attendant.

"You are completely mistaken, Skinner," remonstrated the Duke. "Snape expressly specified pure water. I appeal to any man in his senses, whether the solution of colchicum is not always given in pure water?"

"I can only attend to my directions, my Lord," replied the offended gentleman in waiting, who assumed the privilege of placing robust health to tyrannize over the nervous invalid.

It is really most perplexing—I am sure I know not what to

do for the best!" faltered the poor old Duke, with a glance of anxious distress at the salver. "If Egerton were here, he would advise me! The death of my poor sister, the late Lady Tiverton, was certainly caused by allowing an attack of rheumatic gout to come on;—which Snape assures me might have been kept off, had the Bath physicians understood her constitution—or known what they were about."

"I have unhappily some experience in such matters," interposed Julius, replying to the appealing look of the valetudinarian. "During ten years of my grandfather's life, he was a martyr to the complaint from which your grace appears to suffer; and for which he *then* fancied there was no remedy but colchicum."

"There *is* no other!" said the Duke, knitting his brows.—"Snape is of opinion that it is the only effective check."

"In my grandfather's case it proved otherwise. So long as he had recourse to colchicum, his constitution remained in the most shattered condition; but"—

"God bless my soul! Pray sit down again, Mr. Egerton. If you are in no immediate hurry, pray do me the favour to sit down again," faltered the Duke. "Skinner! I will ring for you when I want you. Perhaps I may decide that—*Pray*, Mr. Egerton, sit down."

And while the discomfited, confidential gentleman removed himself out of sight, Julius, cross-questioned by the Duke, afforded circumstantial details of Dr. Spry's mode of treatment under the care of divers practitioners—his adoption of the some time fashionable nostrum of the *eau médicinale*, and his final relinquishment of so perilous a remedy, on the advice of the greatest physician of his time, the late Sir Trismegistus Doseington.

"These are very interesting facts," faltered the Duke, when Julius had recapitulated certain professional anecdotes of sudden deaths produced by the use of colchicum, which were familiarized to him by the frequent repetition of the poor old Doctor and aunt Rachel. "I should vastly like to hear what Snape may have to say in answer. I have certainly sometimes thought that he was a little too sanguine in favour of so very violent a remedy. I have sometimes fancied that colchicum was his hobby; but there is no resisting the evidence of facts—the force of experiment. It may be a very fortunate occurrence for me, Mr. Egerton, that I was not already out on my airing at the moment of your visit. Would you have any objection, pray, to mention the circumstances you have politely related to me, in presence of Dr. Snape?"

"Not the slightest," replied Julius, with a smile. "My health is too good to admit of my apprehending the animosity of the faculty."

"You appear, indeed, to enjoy rude health!" sighed the Duke, with a glance of envy at the athletic person of his grandnephew. "The living concerning which you were talking to me just now—

Helstone, Helpstone, what is it?—must be a very salubrious spot."

"We have reason to infer so, since the present incumbent has attained his ninetieth year," replied Julius.

"Dr. Spry in his ninetieth year—yet afflicted with constitutional rheumatic gout?" ejaculated the Duke, with an air of intense interest. "Yet his cause must have been both a laborious and an anxious one?"

"A cause, perhaps, why his attention should have been less absorbed by his health, and consequently why he should not have increased his ailment by a diversity of remedies," observed Julius.

"At all events," said the Duke of Pelham, warming towards a young gentleman who had no objection to waste his logic upon an infirm grandfather, "the advanced age of Dr. Spry renders it probable that the living of Helstone will become disposable during my lifetime, and at no very remote epoch. I have consequently to infer that, in advocating the interests of the rector, you are defending your own?"

"Your grace must pardon me," Julius was beginning; but the Duke waived his hand and would not be interrupted.

"As a near connection of the Pelham family," he continued, "you have claims, my dear Sir, on my attention such as I see no cause for assigning to an ordinary incumbent. I cannot take upon me to decide a question of which I do not understand a syllable; but I shall not hesitate to furnish you with a note to Merewether, stating you to be my grandnephew, and recommending you to his immediate attention. This, I have little doubt, will suffice to set matters straight."

Then, turning towards a table covered with papers (which, though assuming a business-like appearance, consisted chiefly of prescriptions), the Duke proceeded leisurely to the performance of his promise; so leisurely, indeed, that before the credentials were signed, sealed, and delivered, Dr. Snape, triumphantly announced by Skinner, bustled into the room.

"Exceedingly sorry to learn that your grace has passed so unsatisfactory a night!" cried the suburban Esculapius with professional privilege—for doctors, like time and tide, wait for no man.

"I will speak to you in a moment," replied the Duke, continuing to fold up his letter with a dignified air; and Dr. Snape, already predisposed against Julius by the reports of the confidential valet, began to cast an evil eye on the intruder in whose favour he was thus scurvily entreated. He received the Duke of Pelham's presentation to "My kinsman, Mr. Egerton," with sullen contempt. But when his grace attempted to recapitulate the anecdotes related by Julius with regard to his favourite nostrum, the doctor's ire exploded ere his noble patient could complete his first period.

"Your grace must condescend to pardon me," said he, "if I decline listening to ex-professional evidence. To the subject in

question I have given my very assiduous professional attention. My own professional experience confirms the opinions derived from the highest authorities of the profession ; nor can I allow my professional judgment to be impugned by *unprofessional* advisers—persons who either ignorantly or mischievously”——

“But the late Sir Trismegistus Doseington, Sir !” interrupted the Duke, in his turn. “The late Sir Trismegistus”——

“*Sir Trismegistus Doseington !*” ejaculated the indignant doctor, with what an Irishman would call a snuff-the-moon attitude. “The worn-out professor of an obsolete school !—a remnant of the last century !—a specimen of the broad-wheel-wagon class of practice ! Your grace surely forgets that Sir Trismegistus has been in his grave these three years—*three years*, my Lord !—during which the science of medicine has been advancing with gigantic strides. Sir Trismegistus was in his dotage before iodine, hydrocyanic acid, or colchicum were in their cradle. If; however, it be by any means your grace’s wish to be governed in the care of your health by the theories of any new professional or unprofessional man, I have only to express now, as I have often expressed to my Lord Egerton before, my perfect readiness to resign the superintendence of your grace’s constitution into”——

“You mistake me, my dear Snape ; you wholly and totally mistake me !” faltered the Duke, not allowing him to come to the close of what sounded so much like a menace of resignation. “We will discuss this matter some other time, when you are more at leisure. I am expecting Egerton to-day to a late dinner—perhaps you will meet him ?”

The pacified doctor made a scrape of acquiescence. “And if you, my dear Sir, would also favour me with your company,” resumed the Duke, turning anxiously towards his grandnephew, “I should be highly gratified.”

Julius, however, pleaded his previous engagement to Lord Storby ; not a little pleased at having a pretext to escape a compulsory introduction to his haughty cousin, and the society of the irritated Snape.

“At all events,” said the Duke, advancing towards young Egerton, as he made his parting obeisance, “I shall expect the honour of another visit from you before you leave London.”

An agreeable surprise awaited Julius on his return to town. Lord Storby, without a preliminary word to either brother, had bestirred himself at the Horse-Guards ; and the first intimation of the exercise of his interest in Captain Egerton’s favour, was a letter from the commander-in-chief, authorizing his acceptance of the staff-appointment previously offered by the general of his division.

The terms in which the Viscount replied to the eager thanks of Julius, would probably have apprized a man more versed in worldly usages, that Storby pleaded guilty to an ulterior object in

securing the good-will of the family at Hurley House. But the thoughts of Julius were preoccupied ; and even had he taken note of the words of his generous friend, it would never have occurred to him to apply this insinuation to his sister.

Vexed by his inapprehensiveness, Lord Storby resolved to explain himself more perspicuously on the morrow. But on the morrow, Julius was gone ! When Captain Egerton and his patron returned from a breakfast at Kenwood, for which Julius had declined an invitation, a letter from the latter, stating himself to have been recalled to Helstone by particular business, was placed in John Egerton's hands.

"I had a suspicion that Julius intended to shirk us !" exclaimed Storby, in a tone of pique. "I watched him last night at the Opera after he left Lady Tiverton's box, and felt convinced that he wanted only a pretext to bolt, and leave you to finish your fortnight in town alone."

"Depend on it he is right !" was Captain Egerton's kind reply ; "Julius knows himself better than we know him. He will be happier in peace and quietness at Helstone."

"No doubt he was bored among our rattling, empty set !" replied Storby. "As you observe, it is natural enough for a man of his calling to hanker after retirement." But he was evidently deeply mortified by the abruptness of his friend's departure.

To peace and quietness, meanwhile, poor Julius had little chance of returning. It is true that on a false pretence he had fled from the agitation of London ; but, as his brother truly surmised, it was because he found himself falling too readily into the vortex. The flatteries and contumelies of the world touched him too nearly ; and he who, in his rural retreat, had at times fancied himself sanctified with peculiar grace, found with dismay that he was in truth a thousand-fold more susceptible than others to the attractions of artificial life !

His arrival at Helstone rendered this truth more painfully apparent than even his sojourn in London. He was grown fretful, impatient, ill at ease ; and had scarcely forbearance for the persecutions of aunt Rachel. So lately an object of praise and admiration to eminent men, he could not support being lectured like a boy. It was indeed too dear a purchase for the reversion of a living, to submit to the documentations of Miss Spry.

His spirit chafed against the yoke of this pitiful dependence. It was hard to be unable to gratify so much as the impulses of his benevolent heart. He was alike destitute of the means of doing good or harm ; a poor, negative, powerless, shriftless being, debarred the very exercise of the capacities lavished upon him by Providence. If he found it dangerous to remain in town, to remain at Helstone was impossible.

After a severe reprimand from aunt Rachel for not having brought the tithe question to an issue by waiting in person upon

Mr. Merewether with the credentials he had obtained from the Duke of Pelham, instead of enclosing his grace's letter by the post, Julius wandered into the village to escape further humiliation at her hands; then, harassed by the weight of minor duties which he had never before found oppressive, gradually prolonged his walk into the country. However ill-inclined to encounter the patronizing impertinence of Lady Smyth, it was necessary to pay a visit of ceremony at Helstone Park, to acknowledge Dr. Lawnly's assistance.

He was not, however, prepared for the increase of consequence which the great lady of the Park chose to assume, as the origin of his acquaintance with Silas Vivian. Lady Smyth seemed to suppose that the lion-hunter had been kind enough to bring him forward in London, merely as a deserving young man living in the neighbourhood of Helstone Park. The whole detachment of stayers in the house was at luncheon when he entered; and, before he could finish his acknowledgments to the pompous Dr. Lawnly, the self-sufficient hostess was claiming others at his hands.

"It is a great satisfaction to us, Mr. Egerton," said she, "that our friend Mr. Vivian was able to do any thing for you. As I was remarking to my brother yesterday, the Sprys are such worthy sort of people, that it is vastly pleasant to know we have been the means of bringing forward their young relation."

The misses of the party stared contemptuously at the curate, on hearing him thus loftily addressed. But matters grew worse when the *he* Smyth entered the room.

Sir Robert was a jocosse gentleman; and the ironies uttered by his coarse, untunable voice, sounded more insolent than from a milder organ.

"So, Mr. Egerton," shouted he, as if addressing his hounds, "you are back, then, no bigger than you went, eh? Upon my soul, Sir, we were in doubt whether you were likely to condescend ever to set foot again in Helstone! Such fine accounts as our friend Vivian gave of your proceedings! Preaching at St. James's—dining at his table! You will hardly be able to play your knife and fork at *our* humble board, I fancy, after dining with Silas Vivian, eh? Whom did you meet there, pray?"

"One or two literary men, besides my brother and Lord Storby," replied Julius, coldly.

"Oh, ho! Vivian introduced you, then, to Lord Storby? *That*, give me leave to tell you, Mr. Egerton, may prove a serious advantage to you. His lordship, I fancy, has famous patronage in the church."

"I rather think *not*," replied Julius, calmly.

"I beg your pardon, Sir! My friend Vivian may not have boasted of it: but, depend upon it, he had some strong motive for making you acquainted with his lordship."

"I had the pleasure of presenting my friend Storby to Mr.

Vivian," said Julius coolly. "We were college friends; and dined together several times during our stay in town, at my uncle Lord Tiverton's."

No sooner had the words escaped his lips than Julius felt ashamed of them; for he was conscious of a desire to overawe the pretensions of the Smyths. At least, however, the attempt prospered; for Sir Thomas, who was acquainted with the curate of Helstone only in his relationship to the Sprys, and conceived, from the unassuming tone of old Egerton of Hurley, that he had done something or other to disgrace his Honourableness, and was not noticed by his family, stood aghast on learning the recent exaltation of his son.

"You must have enjoyed your little trip amazingly," simpered Lady Smyth, in a dulcified tone. "The Captain is probably detained by the gay parties still going on? I think I saw something yesterday in the *Post* about a charming concert given last week by the Countess of Tiverton?"

"It was a very small party. There are not many people in town just now," replied Julius. "My brother is staying to complete some arrangements relative to his new appointment."

"Oh, ho! an *appointment*!" rejoined Sir Thomas, perceiving that the Honourableness of William Egerton was beginning to bring forth fruit. "Procured, no doubt, by the Earl of Tiverton?"

"By the interest of Lord Storby," replied Julius, briefly. "My brother will be gazetted to-morrow as deputy-quartermaster-general in the southern district of Ireland."

"I sincerely trust Captain Egerton will visit Helstone again before he takes his departure for that country," cried Lady Smyth, graciously. "He must positively favour us with his company to dinner. Mrs. Mitford was saying, the other day, that Captain Egerton had been casting an eye towards Miss Heseltine of Eastwick. We thought it odd at the time; because, between ourselves, Captain Heseltine's daughter was at one time considered a good match for young Mitford of Mitford. However, if the Captain has got a staff appointment, the heiress may, perhaps, think more of him than when he had nothing to recommend him but his epaulets."

Julius coloured deeply at this attack. But Sir Robert, who in the interim had been assisting Dr. Lawnly in the demolition of a chicken-pie, luckily prevented any necessity for rejoinder.

"Supposing, my dear Sir, you stay and eat your mutton with us?" said he, with sudden condescension; while the countenances of the stranger young ladies brightened at the idea of such an acquisition to their party as a handsome young man, who, though nothing but a curate, was redeemed from utter ignominy by being nephew to an earl. "You need not be scrupulous about your boots; I can send a lad across the fields to fetch your things to dress, and apologize to the good lady at the Parsonage."

"I am sorry to be under the necessity of declining," said Julius, abruptly rising to take leave; while Dr. Lawnly looked up from the almond puffs to which he was helping himself, with a glance of amazement at such a breach of privilege as a curate's refusing an invitation to dinner from the squire of the parish.

"Come, come, you can't be engaged; we *know* you are not engaged. There is not a soul down yet in the neighbourhood, except Sir Clarence Howard, who never invites you," cried Sir Robert.

But without a word of explanation, and with a most ungrateful bow, Julius Egerton quitted the room. The footmen, though lounging in the hall in attendance on the luncheon, did not deign to move towards the door to escort him out. They were all London gentlemen. *They* had no grandmothers in the Helstone workhouse, or sick wives in the Helstone cottages: and the good works of Julius Egerton were consequently a blank. To *them* he was "only the curate!"

On arriving at home, the irritation he had been vainly labouring to subdue during his walk, subsided in a moment at the sight of his father's honest face. Apprized by a letter from his eldest son of Julius's sudden departure from town, William Egerton had hastened over from Hurley to hear the news. He had a thousand questions to ask; and though, luckily for Julius, aunt Rachel chose that they should be preceded by a thousand of her own, touching Tunbridge Wells and its multifarious company, there came a time when it was necessary to reply. The cheerful, happy father sat down to dinner hungry after his ride, and inquisitive after long abstinence from news of his family.

"Well, and so Tiverton was very kind and attentive to you both, and welcomed you heartily to his house?" said William, who always discerned in the conduct of others the reflection of his own warm nature.

"Yes, very kind and hospitable," answered Julius, scarcely able to repress a sigh. "He inquired much after you, my dear father, and seemed pleased to learn that you enjoy excellent health."

"Ay, thank God, nobody better!—And my brother?—I hope Tiverton wears pretty well? Tiverton is no chicken, and"——

"Sixty-four on the 24th of next November," interrupted aunt Rachel, glancing round to the window-seat to ascertain whether her favourite volumes were at hand to corroborate her statement; "just fourteen months older than the Marchioness of Easthampton, who was born on the 26th of January, seventeen hundred and"——

"Come, come! No anno-dominizing when a lady's age is in the case!" cried Mr. Egerton, interrupting her in his turn. "I give up my brother Adolphus to you. You may date *him* to an hour, if you like; though Lord Holwell assured me, when he was down at Tunbridge last year, that no one would guess him within fifteen years, thanks to a patent wig and a hundred patent washes.

What did you think of your uncle Adolphus, Ju ? I fancy it's the first time you ever came within hail of him ? ”

“ You misunderstood me, Sir, if you fancy that I spoke of having seen him.”

“ What—not at Tiverton House ! Well, I must say I take it unkind of Tiverton not to have invited poor Dol to meet you.”

“ I doubt whether Lord Tiverton would presume so far,” answered Julius, with a smile. “ He knows better than to take liberties with a man of such unutterable importance.”

“ Importance ! Hey-go-mad. What's in the wind now ? ” cried William. “ What can you possibly mean ? ” And the inquiry was so eagerly seconded by aunt Rachel, that Julius was obliged to attempt an explanation of the responsibilities of the dowager dandy's social position. But he might have spared his pains. To make it comprehensible to their unsophisticated minds, that a younger brother, living on a small annuity, could be in a situation to look down upon an earl with a rent-roll of forty thousand a-year, was impossible.

“ Adolphus was always a phlegmatic, reserved sort of character,” was William Egerton's *resumé* of the arguments of his son ; “ and I suppose Tiverton was of opinion that, as you have got through a third of your lives without making his acquaintance, you might go on to the end of your days without fretting after it. Besides, with a houseful of sons and daughters of his own, he may not care to be troubled too much with his brother's company.”

“ He is quite as little troubled with that of his sons. Lord Egerton is never seen in his house ; and Dick Egerton told me he did not dine there twice in the season.”

“ The Honourable Richard Egerton Egerton, born in ”—— aunt Rachel was beginning ; but her brother-in-law stopped her short with the outburst of his amazement.

“ Not dine with his own father ! Lord Egerton live in London, yet never seen at Tiverton House ! ” cried he. “ Neither his brother nor his sons at his table ! Why, with whom in the world does my brother associate ? ”

“ With the most eminent men in society,” replied Julius ; “ for in London to be fashionable is the most eminent of eminence ! ”

“ And their ladyships, his daughters ? ” inquired aunt Rachel, primly. “ They must be nearly women grown. Let me see. If I remember rightly, Lady Ismena Egerton was born in ”——

“ I am half inclined to repeat my father's observations, my dear aunt, and entreat you to desist from chronicling young ladies' ages,” said Julius, assuming a more cheerful tone ; “ suffice it, that Lady Ismena is one of the most beautiful women in England—handsome, showy, accomplished ”——

“ Like her mother in face ? ” inquired William Egerton, pushing away the plate, on which he had been doing tremendous execution.

"Like what Lady Tiverton may have been in her youth. At present, she is all wig and teeth."

"Hillo, hillo! for a young gentleman pretending to the championship of the sex; my dear boy, you are running your rigs strangely!" cried William Egerton. "However, I'm glad to find you so much smitten with your cousin. And the younger girl—pray, does *she* take after the Countess?"

"No two people can be more dissimilar."

"Poor Lady Henrietta is no beauty, then?" demanded William, helping himself liberally to currant tart.

"Not what is usually called a beauty," stammered Julius. "She is rather pale—in delicate health."

"Not to be compared, in short, with her elder sister?" persisted the father, with an arch and knowing nod. "Come, come! I see how matters stand! don't blush about it, my boy! I always heard that Tiverton's eldest girl was one of the finest creatures about town; and why shouldn't *you* find it out as readily as the rest of them?"

And poor William Egerton immediately set it down that the heart of his son was seriously touched by the charms of Lady Ismena.

Long familiarized, however, with the flirtations of a watering-place, he saw nothing to apprehend from the case. "Ju would probably go moping about the parish for a week or two—spoil a quire or so of wire-wove in sonnets—and lose an hour or two of sleep per night in trying to fish out rhymes for 'Ismena,' and there would be an end of the matter."

The preference, meanwhile, which really embarrassed the replies of Julius Egerton, absorbing him in reverie while his father and aunt proceeded to discuss the news of Hurley and its neighbourhood, was of a nature very unlikely to expend itself in sonnets.

Two evenings spent by the side of his younger cousin had produced impressions of the most painful nature. He saw, in the mild and subdued Lady Henrietta, a being accordant with his utmost notions of feminine perfection. Of all the family, she alone appeared to adopt towards him the kindly feelings of relationship. She had addressed him at once in a tone of confidence, as the man nearest in kin to her after her brothers; and though Julius had sense enough to discern that the frankness of her deportment proceeded solely from the feeling that he was an Egerton—her father's brother's son—though, unblinded by vanity, he saw that the gentle cordiality of her manner was instinctive, the impulse of kindred blood—the impression produced upon his feelings was not the less bewildering.

But while still agitated by the emotions which Lady Henrietta's affectionate softness of demeanour had awakened in his bosom, the utmost bitterness of humiliation suddenly crushed the aspirations of his soul. He recollected Lord Storby's hint, that he was onl-

permitted by Lady Ismena and her mother to enjoy unmolested the conversation of his lovely cousin, as a person too insignificant to be dangerous—a poor relation—a needy parson. Though conscious that at present Lady Henrietta distinguished him but as a near connection, he felt that a congeniality of tastes and pursuits might have enabled him to convert cousinly regard into womanly tenderness, were his position such as to justify his pretending to her hand.

But between the daughter of the Countess of Tiverton and the curate, or even the rector of Helstone, a great gulf was fixed!—There was no chance for him—no hope. The gentle girl, whose “dove’s eyes might have made gods forsworn,” could never be more to him than a cousin. Misgoverned by her mother and sister, she would probably form an interested match—probably subdue her elevated thoughts and enfeeble her intense feelings to the vulgar standard of a worldly life—probably become frivolous, vain, hard-hearted—a mere woman of fashion!

The blood thrilled in his veins as he admitted such a possibility. A being framed by nature in the noblest mould of her sex—a being destined to be all that is purest and dearest in domestic life, to be trailed in the dust of London publicity, and nailed perhaps at length to the gibbet of vulgar condemnation;—while he, whose tenderness, if sanctioned by the sacred authority of marriage, might redeem her from such a destiny—he must stand by unurmuring, and behold her sacrificed to the thralldom of a heartless world.

Never before had Julius fully admitted to himself the insignificance of his worldly position! Scarcely a man among those with whom he had run his career of college dissipation, but was privileged to pretend to a happiness which to himself was as unattainable as an empire. The utmost his most sanguine hopes could promise was a tolerable living; and what would Lady Tiverton say—what would Lady Ismena look—in answer to his proposals of settling the beautiful Lady Henrietta Egerton in a country parsonage? In his distracted solitude, he laughed aloud with frantic bitterness at the mere surmise of such a proposition; and rejoiced at the self-command which had enabled him, on the first indications of a passion for his lovely but forbidden cousin, to hasten from London and fly the perilous enjoyment of her society.

But he left her among those who despised him—those whom he despised. Their transient acquaintance would probably escape her memory as a matter of no moment. By the end of the season she would forget that her country cousins had been even for a moment tolerated in St. James’s Square. When they met again, Lady Henrietta, who had sat conversing with him for hours that passed like moments, in murmurs that might have passed for music—of books, of country pleasures, of the higher enjoyments of the human mind—would perhaps turn aside with a passing salu-

tation as her brother had done before—unconscious or regardless of the sentiments she had called into existence!

"And Julius?" inquired Georgiana Heseltine, when, at the expiration of a week, Captain Egerton returned to Hurley to take leave of his family previous to proceeding to his new duties—"How did the gay doings you have been describing suit his saintly habits?"

"I have never perceived any sanctity in his habits beyond the forms inseparable from his profession," replied John Egerton, not liking to hear his brother quizzed, even by the lady of his love.

"But even the formalities of his profession, as he understands them at Helstone or Hurley, must have been strangely out of place among such fantasticalities as I have heard Clara and Emma Mitford describe Lady Tiverton and her daughters."

"The Misses Mitford are too fashionable not to describe like caricaturists. However, I believe Lady Ismena Egerton *was* rather too flighty for Ju's sense of propriety. At least, his friend Lord Storby was of opinion that he hastened from London to be out of harm's way."

"While *you* did honour to your cloth by staying and standing fire."

"I had a panoply of defence," replied John Egerton, lowering his voice to a tone which, as he was sitting beside Miss Heseltine on a garden-bench, under shelter of a spreading beech-tree, with only her absent father as chaperon, the young lady seemed to consider rather alarming. "I have nothing to fear from the attractions of London beauties. It is many years since I had a heart to throw away."

"You are in luck," cried Georgiana, not leaving him a moment to hazard further declarations. "And, as the better part of valour is discretion, Julius was very wise to take refuge from himself in the dulness of Helstone Parsonage."

"To be sure, Helstone *must* be vastly dull for him, poor young man," said Captain Heseltine, roused up from his reverie by the forced laugh with which his daughter's last observation was accompanied. "I often wonder that, at Julius's age, he is able to confine himself as he does. Miss Spry is a very superior woman, certainly—vastly companionable, and full of valuable information. But I have sometimes thought that all day long, and all the year round, she might be apt to get a leetle tiresome."

"Julius is occupied by his professional duties," said John. "When he gets possession of the living, he will probably marry and secure a more desirable companion than aunt Rachel."

"No doubt. But he may be advanced in life before he has the opportunity."

"The days of miracles are past," was John Egerton's reply. "For a man to get on in any profession unbacked by powerful in-

terest, is out of the question. Nothing but a word from Lord Storby secured my appointment ; and unless the Egertons bestir themselves for Julius, at Helstone he must remain for the rest of his days. I had a letter from him to-day, written in some bitterness of spirit. It is true, his preaching produced a strong sensation ; but sensations in town are transitory things."

"I have no wish to see my friend Mr. Egerton a popular preacher," observed Georgiana with rising colour. "Heavy as may be his bondage, I have no desire to see him quit Helstone. All I am anxious for—all his friends are anxious for," she added correcting her phrase—"is, that he should be at peace with himself, and not always arrayed in his seven-leagued boots, to outstrip all competitors in the race of godliness."

Had aunt Rachel been present at this declaration, she would naturally have regarded it as a singular demonstration of personal interest on the part of the Eastwick heiress, who so seldom troubled herself to express an opinion concerning the worldly prospects of her friends. But John Egerton, whose heart was at that moment beating with emotions of a personal nature, was chiefly intent upon discovering the exact moment when Captain Hesel-tine's ideas would become once more sufficiently divergent from passing objects to admit of his hazarding a whisper of inquiry to Georgiana, whether, whilst his professional prospects were becoming so brilliant, those of his affections were perpetually to remain under a cloud.

At such a moment, he might be pardoned for dropping the defence of his brother.

Hurley House, whose domestic peace had been so many years permanent under the ascendancy of orderly heads and unimpassioned hearts, was now beginning to be visited by intermingled gusts of good and evil, the concomitants of younger natures. With three grown-up sons and a pretty daughter, William Egerton and his wife could not expect to sleep so quietly on their pillows as when their worst anxiety was the incurrence of an additional half-crown in the amount of their weekly bills.

Great news had arrived from London with their eldest son. In addition to the gratification experienced by their parental pride, in learning from John's own lips the particulars of his promotion to a lucrative appointment, and of Julius's London triumphs, they had to be apprised of Lord Storby's project to visit Tunbridge Wells in the course of the ensuing month, with the avowed intention of recommending himself to the favour of their daughter.

"Come, come; you are joking!" was William Egerton's first exclamation, in reply to his son's communication. "Lord Storby? Why, *that* was the young fellow who was down at Eastwick last year with the Mitfords; and, from something Philip Mitford let fall, I understood Lady Tiverton had been making up to him for one of her daughters."

"They have been trying these two years past to catch him for Lady Ismena; which may be one of the reasons of his preferring my sister's unassuming, gentle manners," replied John.

"Ay, ay, no doubt he thought dear Mary a modest, pretty-behaved girl, as God knows she is. But making her a viscountess, and putting her at the head of twenty thousand a-year"——

"I believe if you double the sum you will be nearer the mark," interrupted John, with a smile, though somewhat vexed to find his sister's pretensions rated so low by her father.

"My dear Jack, if you had lived as much as I have in the neighbourhood of a watering-place," observed his father in a confidential tone, "you would know that girls of twice poor Mary's pretensions are liable to receive attentions which have no ulterior object."

"I should recommend no man to hazard the attempt with Mary Egerton!" replied John, with flashing eyes. "In the present case, however, we are safe. Lord Storby, who is one of the most honourable men, as well as the most charming fellows I ever met with, inquired of me at once, and without reserve, whether my sister's affections were engaged."

"Engaged?" reiterated Egerton, rubbing his hands. "Why, to whom *should* they be engaged? There's not a beau that I know of to be had for love or money in the whole neighbourhood; no, nor so much as a single single man, except my friend old Heseltine!"

"No very dangerous rival for Storby, certainly," replied Captain Egerton, with a smile. "Still, among the hundreds of Tunbridge loungers, admitted at Eastwick, Mary may have stumbled on an admirer."

"Not she. The Tunbridge dandies who make their way to Heseltine's are regular fortune-hunters, not likely to have so much as wished good-day to a daughter of mine. However, so much the better, since Mary's lucky stars have thrown such a chance in her way. She can't fail to take a fancy to this young fellow, eh?—Six feet high—and eyes and hair as black as a coal-sack!"

"Lord Storby is rather diminutive, and very fair."

"Ay, ay? I dare say I mistook young Mitford for him, and him for young Mitford. Young men look pretty much alike to me, unless it happens to be one of my own sons. I'll go and break the matter to Mary directly. To be sure, this is the most extraordinary stroke of fortune! Are you quite sure, my dear boy, that it's not Georgiana Heseltine Lord Storby is thinking of all this time?"

"Quite sure," replied John, edified by his father's simplicity. "But, pray, say nothing at present to Mary. It will be better for her to meet Lord Storby without embarrassment."

"But if she should throw cold water on his flame by being ungracious? Mary is so little accustomed to the society of fine gentlemen, that"——

"Let my sister only appear as she did when she captivated

Storby's affections, and he can have no right to complain," replied Captain Egerton. "Dear Mary is not likely to be ungracious towards one who has acted so friendly a part towards her brothers."

"No, indeed! I had forgotten *that*, which it ill becomes me to do; for, God knows, this young man has shewn himself readier to come forward in your behalf than my own kith and kin. I've reason to be proud of all my children, John, and *that* you know I'm well aware of. But if there's one among you closer to my heart than another, it's Mary; and reason good, you'll say, as she has never left sight of her parents. I can scarce remember the night when I went to my bed without giving my blessing to my daughter."

William Egerton's eyes were filled with tears, and his voice beginning to falter. To restore his spirits, John hastily reverted to the many advantages of the match which was to separate him from his child; the excellent character borne by Lord Storby; his long acquaintance with Julius; and all the accessories of rank and opulence attached to his worldly position.

"Ay, ay! My little girl will be able to look my sister-in-law and nieces in the face yet!" cried William, rubbing his hands at the picture drawn laughingly by Captain Egerton of Mary in her coronation robes sweeping past the mortified Lady Ismena Egerton. "Good gracious! what a triumph for my poor dear wife! And what will aunt Rachel say?"

"It will be more prudent, perhaps, to give them no opportunity of discussing the subject for the present," said John. "Wait and see what impression Storby makes on my sister. Time enough *then* to let the world into our secret."

"Time enough to let *the world*. But your mother, my dear boy, your mother has paramount claims to my confidence. Olivia and I have been man and wife these eight-and-twenty years and more; and I can safely say that the thought was never lodged in my bosom which, before I slept, was not communicated to her. That is *my* notion of happy wedlock, Jack; and, trust me, where matters stand otherwise between a married couple, there is, or has been, or will be, something amiss. If ever you are rich enough to take a wife, treasure up this maxim of mine and abide by it."

And while Captain Egerton, as if eager to make the earliest profit of these parental counsels, took his hat and marched off straight in the direction of Eastwick, William Egerton hastened to communicate to his faithful partner the good fortune that awaited their daughter. Having formed some acquaintance during Lady Holwell's long sojourn at Hammond's with the fluctuation of lady-like nerves, he was careful to reveal the wonderful tidings by degrees, lest burnt feathers and æther should come into request; for if ever in her life his dear Olivia had a pretext for a fit of hysterics, it was on learning that her daughter was likely to become a peeress of the realm.

But, to his great surprise, Mrs. Egerton did not so much as raise her eyes from the woollen comfortable she was knitting for her son.

"And so the young man will be down here in the course of August," said she at last, perceiving that her husband paused for a reply. "I am sure I hope Julius will make it convenient to come over and help us entertain him. The utmost civility in our power is due to one whose interest has been so kindly exerted for John."

"But you don't seem to understand, my love, that Lord Storby is coming here solely to court dear Mary. What will he want with Julius, or any one else?"

"He is only coming, I suppose, to feel his way, before he ventures on a downright proposal?" observed Mrs. Egerton, calmly.

"Well, and what then? You don't fancy that a week will be enough for preliminaries."

"I shall be very much surprised if he waits half the time," replied Olivia, coolly.

"Why, it would scarcely look well, you know, either for *us* or our girl, if he received such encouragement as determined him to pop the question at once."

"I would wager a good deal that he never pops it at all! A couple of days will convince him that he was not made for Mary, nor Mary for *him*."

"Depend on't, Livy, neither you nor I are such competent judges as the young folks themselves," replied Egerton, almost vexed. "Lord Storby saw the girl morning, noon, and night, during the Tunbridge race-week, last year; and if the idea entered his head of making her his wife, it was of no one's putting there but his own. Lord Storby made up his mind without consulting any one."

"I was not thinking of Lord Storby," replied Mrs. Egerton, still plying her knitting-needles. "The only person whose happiness concerns *me* in the case, is Mary."

"And you fancy Mary would object to such a match?"

"I hope so."

"You hope so!" ejaculated the astonished father. "And why, pray?"

"Because, unless I am mistaken, he is not a man to her liking."

"Why, what fault in the world can she find with him?" cried the indignant Egerton.

"Indeed I don't know, my dear; we are not always able to give good reasons for our likings and dislikings. But I remember that, when that gay party was going on at Eastwick, Mary always gave the preference to young Mitford and her cousin, Mr. Egerton, over Lord Storby."

Poor William shrugged his shoulders with mortification. "I'm sure I should be the last man in the world to force a child of mine to marry against her will," said he; "I followed my fancy,

and would fain have those belonging to me follow theirs. Still, my dear, without thwarting poor Mary, I think it our duty to point out to her the advantages of the match, instead of letting her see that we anticipate her refusal."

"As far as telling her that she is never likely to do better in the world, and that it is a fine thing to be a great lady, and free from all anxiety about a provision for her husband or children, I will do what I can," replied Mrs. Egerton, according to her circumscribed view of the matter. "But Mary's sense is a match for ours; and I've a notion she'll see clearly enough that she is not likely to be at her ease in a sphere of life so much above her own."

"I wish your sister could hear you, my dear Livy!" cried her husband. "I forbid John to whisper a word to aunt Rachel of the matter, lest she should testify too much eagerness about the match. If Miss Spry knew that Mary had a chance of figuring in Debrett, not a soul in the parish of Helstone but would learn the news before night! She, at least, would have no scruples or misgivings."

"My sister Rachel never was married," replied Mrs. Egerton, dryly, over her work. "She cannot estimate the misery of not having a husband to one's taste."

Satisfied that this insinuation did not reflect upon *him*, Egerton shuffled off to take counsel with himself upon his family perplexities where he was much in the habit of philosophizing—amid his pastures dotted with kine. Next to Livy and her offspring, these meek-mouthed favourites were nearest to his heart; and, as he sauntered forth on the present occasion, they seemed to testify their sympathy in his paternal anxiety, by coming lowing towards him.

"To be sure," thought he, as he noticed each in succession, by a caressing gesture, "the greater part of Mary's life has been spent in humble duties and rural pleasures; but if ever there was a lady born, it is my girl, and there's no reason why she should not become an ornament to the very highest sphere."

If it did glance into his mind at that moment that his dear Livy was less entitled by birth and less qualified than himself to appreciate the advantages of aristocratic connection, the kind father might be pardoned. It was not often that he recollected himself to be the "Honourable William Egerton!"

But though Mr. Egerton kept faith with his son and Mrs. Egerton with her husband, so far as to abstain from communicating to Mary any hint of the high destinies awaiting her, neither father nor mother could help regarding her with looks of peculiar tenderness when the family party met at dinner; not because they hoped she was likely to become a viscountess, but because they feared they were about to lose her.

They knew her value. They knew how her departure from

Hurley would be regretted in the neighbourhood—how it would be lamented by the poor; and though—since according to woman's destinies she must grace another household, and make happy another roof—it was some comfort to feel that in marrying Lord Storby she was likely to ensure both happiness and distinction, William Egerton, as he bent his wistful eyes upon her during dinner-time, remembered only how grievous a trial it would be to behold vacant, for the first time, the place at table so long occupied by his loving child. Apprehensive of attracting her attention, he laboured to regain his usual cheerfulness; and after dinner even adventured a jocosse glance at his faithful partner, as he dedicated the first glass of wine that went round, to "Mary's health."

There was little chance, however, of Miss Egerton becoming observant of the depression or hilarity of her parents; her whole sympathy was with her brother John, who, at the moment of attaining unlooked-for professional advancement, was stung to the quick by having ascertained beyond a doubt that he was an object of indifference to the woman from whom he had once fancied himself divided only by inequality of fortune. He had fulfilled his intentions; had proposed, had been rejected; and though Georgiana Heseltine, the moment she became aware of his purpose, had met him half-way with the hope of sparing him fruitless mortification, the avowal of engaged affections, with which she attempted to silence his proposition, afforded him more pain than consolation.

"I dare say she meant it for the best," was his remark, when pouring forth his confessions to his sister on his return from Eastwick; "but if she could conceive the happiness I have derived during the last five years from even the trifling hopes of which not even your evil prognostications, my dear Mary, could wholly deprive me, she would scarcely have crushed them by so decisive a refusal."

Mary Egerton could not say "Amen." She felt that in her friend's place she should have acted with the sincerity which distinguished the conduct of her friend. But, though vexed that her brother should have so far neglected her counsels as to incur the mortification of rejection, she forbore to reproach him with the warnings he had chosen to disregard.

"I shall be off to my duties as soon as possible," said Captain Egerton, after listening impatiently to her condolences. "My happiness here, my dearest Mary, is at end. Make what excuses you can to my father and mother, who, I am sure, will resent my quitting Hurley at the present moment. But for worlds say nothing of Georgiana! For worlds, let there be no interruption to the good understanding between Hurley and Eastwick!"

"But you will at least apprize them that your departure for London to-morrow is on your road to Ireland?"

"No! they must know nothing about the matter till I am gone. I dare not expose myself to their efforts to detain me."

"But if you make it apparent that it is for your interest and happiness to hasten your departure?"

"They will still have a right to feel that I ought to concede something to the interest and happiness of others."

Mary looked puzzled, and would fain have persisted in her remonstrances; but John Egerton, who was resolved that, as far as *he* was concerned, no hint of the object of Lord Storby's approaching visit should transpire, sealed her lips with an affectionate kiss, and entreated her to confide for once unquestioning in the prudence of his arrangements.

With a heavy heart, accordingly, he took his departure the following morning; and with a heavy heart Mary prepared to acquaint her father at breakfast, that the early coach, when it threw up its dust upon the Portugal laurels of his court-yard, was carrying off his heir-apparent. But, to her great surprise, her father and mother received the announcement with scarcely more than a passing notice. Both were evidently discomposed, not only by some accidental occurrence, but with each other; a circumstance so all but unexampled in the domestic history of Hurley House, that Mary scarcely dared attempt to fathom the mystery.

Reserve, however, was not in their natures: and, at the conclusion of the ejaculations called forth by the suddenness of their eldest son's departure, they resumed the discussion which Mary's entrance into the breakfast parlour had interrupted.

Julius was their theme, and a letter from Helstone the origin of their disagreement; William Egerton contending, that a letter of complaint he had that morning received from his sister-in-law was frivolous and vexatious, and Olivia persisting that aunt Rachel, who cherished a more than motherly affection for her nephew, was incapable of viewing his conduct in an unhandsome light.

"My sister must have had *much* to complain of before she uttered a word against Julius!" cried Mrs. Egerton warmly.

"And Julius have been harassed out of his life before he allowed himself to call his aunt to order!" retorted the husband.

From a prolongation of the argument, Mary was enabled to gather that, during her brother's absence in town, Miss Spry had busied herself so much more actively than was desirable with the distribution of certain tracts emanating from unorthodox sources, that Julius was forced to forbid all further interference with his parochial duties; whereupon the enraged spinster retorted upon her *protégé* with reproaches of former obligation, till young Egerton, harassed and oppressed, began to curse his life for very bitterness.

"It certainly renders my brother's duty a difficult one, to be kept in subordination like a child," said Mary, when she found her

parents, unused to differ in opinion, beginning gradually to coincide in condemnation of their son. "Highly as Julius is thought of by the neighbourhood, I believe he would be happier any where than at Helstone!"

"As my sister truly observes," interposed Mrs. Egerton, "do what you will for them, young folks are never satisfied with their fortunes. Julius's head is turned with the empty praise he meets abroad, till he can't rest contented without turning matters upside down at home."

"Captain Heseltine is eager that he should give up his curacy and accept a mission," said Mary, in a saddened voice; "and, if these disputes with aunt Rachel continue, it would not much surprise me to find him profit by the advice."

Her father shrugged his shoulders. "I don't understand it," said he. "From that lad's boyhood upward, my sister-in-law has always been reproaching me with not making enough of him. She says I am not half proud enough of Ju; that Ju is the most promising of my sons—the handsomest, the cleverest, the best tempered; yet he is the only one of them of whom I ever hear a complaint, or for whom I feel an anxiety. If, after all, his fine talents and college education should do nothing better for him than carry him out to civilize savages in the Pacific Ocean, I could almost wish"—

He was interrupted. With cheerful brow and head erect, the object of his lamentation walked into the room; and Mary saw in a moment that all was well—that Julius was come neither to complain of others nor to defend himself. The manner of his salutation to the little circle was the indication of a heart at ease. Even before a word escaped his lips, Mary was convinced that he was the bringer of good tidings. Without allowing time to his father to touch upon the chapter of Helstone grievances, he claimed the congratulations of his parents.

"Going to be married?" cried William Egerton, whose head had been running strangely upon matrimony since his confidential conversation with John. "Come, come, *that* accounts for your having been so cross-grained with poor aunt Rachel? We shall make up matters between you yet!"

"Going to be married?" reiterated Mary in a lower tone, conscious that the pain of disappointment which she had so lately seen afflict her elder brother was about to be heavily visited on her friend Georgiana.

"What the devil! Tiverton's fine-lady daughter?"—added her father, casting his eyes on the signature of an open letter with which his son presented him. And even Mrs. Egerton's unexcitable nature was moved to some expression of wonderment at the announcement.

"Read, read, my dear father!" cried Julius, not a little amused at the matrimonial mania with which the sober family of Hurle-

House appeared to be suddenly possessed. "Luckily, it is one of his livings, not one of his daughters, with which my uncle has kindly presented me."

"*A living?*" cried William Egerton groping for his spectacles.

"Burthwaite, a living nearly equal in value to Helstone," added Julius, "and within two miles of Tiverton Castle. My uncle has desired me to make his house as much as possible my home—appoints me his chaplain—and holds out hopes of higher preferment."

"How fortunate—at this moment, how doubly fortunate!" exclaimed Mary.

"Tiverton seems determined to make up for lost time," added her father, as, with flushing cheeks and trembling hands, he attempted to refold the letter. "But how came you into such favour, my dear boy?"

"Till now, my uncle had no opportunity of becoming acquainted with us," observed Julius; intending no reproach to his father, but not wishing to avow his belief that the concession to his nephew was a peace-offering from Lady Tiverton to Lord Storby. "In my letter of acceptance, I could not forbear expressing"—

"You do not mean that you have accepted the preferment offered you by Lord Tiverton without reference to your father?" exclaimed Mrs. Egerton, now *really* astonished.

"Why not, my dear? He must have been aware that I could have no objection to urge!" cried William Egerton, with his usual unselfish cordiality.

"He ought to have been aware that the respect of reference to your opinion was due to such a father," rejoined Mrs. Egerton.

"Come, come, come! no fault-finding, no drawback on his satisfaction at such a moment," cried William Egerton, always willing to look upon the sunny side of things. "It was high time he should leave Helstone, before the Parsonage became too hot to hold him. We must rely upon my brother to make a handsome explanation of the business to the Duke of Pelham. *He'll* find no fault with the change. People are never sorry to get a bit of patronage back into their hands. The Duke will be pleased—*aunt Rachel* will be pleased—all the world will be pleased!"

Mrs. Egerton shook her head.

"Ay, ay—I see how it is!" continued her husband. "You can't help feeling for your father as well as your son. Julius will be a sad loss at Helstone, 'tis true. It can't be expected that a stranger will show the deference he has done to the old Doctor, or have the patience he has had with Rachel Spry. But still, since our son's happiness is at stake"—

"It *is* at stake," replied Mrs. Egerton, pressing the hand which Mary, almost in tears, had silently insinuated into her own; "for, unless I am much mistaken, it will not long outlast the day which sees him become an inmate of Tiverton Castle!"

Sudden and unexpected release from a disagreeable position is apt to blind us to the means by which our emancipation is accomplished. Julius Egerton, in bidding adieu to the vexations of Helstone Parsonage (which, in the irritation of her defeat, aunt Rachel contrived to render at the last moment more than ever insupportable), dismissed from his recollection all his former aspirations after philosophical retreat—all his early pledges to his flock to live and die their pastor.

The civil tone in which he suddenly found himself addressed by his overbearing neighbours the Smyths, by the haughty Sir Clarence Howard, and even by his recalcitrant churchwardens, convinced him that, in spite of his pulpit-popularity, he had been hitherto despised as the puppet of a Miss Rachel Spry—a poor relation of the Pelham family thrust into a situation which no one else could be induced to fill; and, under such circumstances, it was impossible to do less than exult at finding himself suddenly, and without solicitation, restored to his own consideration and the consideration of the world.

Luckily, the angry precipitation of aunt Rachel left him small leisure to grieve over the prospect that the rich harvests he had sown at Helstone might be suffered to perish for lack of care, or to be overrun by the tares scattered by less careful hands. An official substitute was speedily found by the fussy old maid, probably in some established curate mart; and she rejoiced to announce that, since her ungrateful nephew was base enough to desert his promised attendance upon his decrepit relative at the instigation of interest and ambition, he could not depart too soon from Helstone Parsonage.

Even at Hurley, where his adieus were hurriedly made on his way to the north, he had scarcely time to notice the desponding tone of his mother, and the harassed air of his sister, on seeing him about to launch into a sphere of society which they fancied inauspicious to his prospects of happiness. The very taunts of Georgiana Heseltine passed comparatively unregarded.

"Do not boast to *me* of your independence," cried the frank-hearted girl, during the few moments he spent at Eastwick, waiting for a formal catalogue of the geological commissions of the old Captain for Aldstone Moor and Honistar Crag; "you are only about to become the puppet of a Lady Tiverton instead of a Miss Spry, and to be insulted by the notice of duchesses and countesses, instead of a Sir Thomas and Lady Smyth; ay, and even without finding among these people compensation for the lost regard of those who have loved you from childhood, and were disposed to venerate even the weakest word from your lips. You will pine after this human sympathy, perhaps, amid the heartless coteries of Tiverton Castle; unless, indeed, (who knows!) you become heartless and worldly-minded as they!"

Julius Egerton felt indignant at finding himself thus apostro-

phized, rather than alarmed by Georgiana's prognostications. He was leaving behind him a host of annoyances. He was going to those by whom due value had been set upon his merits—those by whom he was understood—those by whom in time he might be loved—those with whom he was born to associate—those whom he was perhaps born to inspire with kindlier feelings towards himself, as well as better thoughts and principles. It was his highest ambition, indeed, to render profitable his sojourn in the Egerton family, by obtaining and exercising such influence over its members as might lead to important moral results.

From his uncle's letters, he saw that he was already in high favour with the Countess. It was at *her* instigation he had been requested to make the Castle his home till the completion of his rectory house, now in progress of repair. But this hospitable arrangement Julius decided to decline. In order to maintain his professional independence, he felt that he must abide under a roof of his own ; and though the population of Burthwaite (a mining district, dependent for its bread upon the working of a rich lead mine belonging to Lord Tiverton, the tithes of which furnished the income of its rector) was so scanty as to threaten little parochial occupation, he determined to take up at once his residence on the spot, which was but a few miles distant from the Castle.

Such was the dream of his journey—such his project in approaching once more the fair domain of his ancestors—the spot which had already exercised so disastrous an influence over his mind. Not even the aspect of its well-remembered beauties swayed him from his purpose. Summer was shedding its genial glories over the place ; gilding the noble turrets, and imparting vernal beauty to the woods. But Julius had learned to survey them in a better spirit than of old. He desired only to be useful in his ministry *there*, as he had been in his humble home : the man having risen superior to the pomps and vanities so enthralling to the imagination of the boy.

Once installed under his uncle's roof, however, and subjected to the spell of Lady Tiverton's domineering spirit, he found it impossible to persist in his project of removal. The Egertons did not infer the possibility of his exercising a choice upon the subject ; and Georgiana Heseltine's prophecies seemed already on the eve of accomplishment.

But how to quarrel with the affectionate cordiality of those who instinctively adopted him as one of their family, and monopolized his time as a precious acquisition to themselves ? Beset by the courtesies of Lady Tiverton and her daughter, experience had not prepared him to know that fine ladies naturally assume affability and cordiality with clogs and straw bonnets, on removing from their London residence to their country seats ; or that it was as much Lady Ismena's cue to be gracious at the Castle, as to be listless in town. *He* had no reason to suspect that the Earl, satisfied that

neither of his fashionable sons would visit him previous to the Christmas holidays, had predestined him (as a gentlemanlike young man bearing the name of Egerton) to the task of assisting to amuse the country neighbours, playing billiards with him on rainy days, and accompanying him in his daily rides on fine; but was honestly taken in by his lordship's apparent kindness in observing—

"There is little or nothing for you to do at Burthwaite. You can ride over to-morrow to read in, and afterwards, whenever you are wanted. But I really cannot part with you at present. You must learn to make yourself at home at Tiverton Castle before I can hear of your installing yourself at Burthwaite Rectory!"

The lesson of making himself at home at the Castle was, of course, far from a disagreeable one. The old-fashioned etiquettes observed during the life of his grandfather, and the bachelor hospitalities of Storby Castle, however much they might tend to unfit him for the servile drudgery of Helstone, had done nothing to prepare him for the admirable style of Lady Tiverton's house and household. Whatever else might be urged against the Countess, there even her sons admitted her to be unimpugnable. The Castle was the pleasantest of country-houses; for, though every guest did as he pleased, she took care to invite only those whose tastes were likely to be pleasing to the community.

The house was full of company when Julius arrived; but this, instead of proving an embarrassment, was a relief to all parties, as the presence of strangers facilitated to Lady Ismena and her mother the transition from their town fashionability to their country frankness. Lady Tiverton received him as a son of her own; nay, more kindly than she presumed to receive her own sons, by both of whom she was held in considerable reserve; and, without the smallest reference to his inclinations, he was seized upon by his cousins and their gay companions, *not* as the new rector of Burthwaite, but as a charming addition to their party. His horse was brought as a matter of course to the door among the rest. Two of the pleasantest bachelor rooms in the Castle were assigned to his use. He was appropriated by Lady Ismena as her escort in all the riding, driving, and boating expeditions; and, though he clearly understood that he owed this honour to insignificant cousinship, to his being voted "a safe man" by her lady mother, the distinction was not the less agreeable. Lady Henrietta, partly from indolence, partly from delicacy of health, seldom joined in the morning amusements of the family. But Julius felt that, if allowed to ride by the side of Lady Ismena, he was also entitled to stroll in the gardens by the side of her sister; and between the privileges conceded to him, and those which he soon contrived to assume, his situation at the Castle was far from unenviable.

Lady Tiverton, whose partialities were as sudden and unaccountable as her dislikings, seemed to delight in making him her confidential agent in the house, the bearer of messages to her daughters, or orders to her servants. She used to take his arm uninvited, and walk him off through the conservatories every morning after breakfast, to confer touching the order of amusement for the day; *who* was to be of the riding party, *who* of the water-party, and *whither* their excursion was to be directed; and scarcely a fortnight had elapsed from the date of Julius's *debut* at the Castle, when a stranger might have been puzzled to guess how they could possibly have got on previous to his coming; into *whose* ear the Countess could have whispered her unimportant mysteries—to *whom* the Earl could have referred at dinner-time for gleanings of the morning papers—and with *whose* assistance the Ladies Egerton could have managed their gipsyings and expeditions on the lake.

It was not often that Julius had even momentary leisure to ponder over things as they were, and things as he had intended them to be; but it was easy to postpone till a more convenient season the hour of reflection. To quit the Castle at present was clearly impossible. It was useless, therefore, to argue with himself upon the discretion of his sojourn. He was at least laying the foundation of that influence from which he anticipated such auspicious results.

He was becoming a general favourite in the neighbourhood. How, in fact, could it be otherwise, when presented by the Countess to all comers as "her nephew, Mr. Egerton, a very rising young man, and a charming addition to the society of Tiverton Castle?"

CHAPTER VII.

BY FAVOUR OF HER LADYSHIP'S PATRONAGE.

THERE was nevertheless an individual to whom the arrival of the handsome young nephew in black was sovereignly displeasing. The Very Reverend Dr. Nicewig, Dean of Darlington, and ex-tutor to Lord Egerton and his brother, was in the habit of passing three months of the year at his rectory of Wyndham, within a mile from the park-gates of Tiverton Castle. When not keeping his residence at his deanery, and presiding over the whist-parties of the Darlington cloisters, or officiating as a royal chaplain and cringing at royal and archiepiscopal levees, he was usually to be found carving Lord Tiverton's venison, or seasoning with modest conservatism the green tea of the dowagers visiting at the Castle, in order to keep an eye upon the movements of his patron, lest his

future chance of a bishopric should be endangered by an incautious profession on the part of the Earl of politics similar to his own.

It would have been difficult to find a more urbane gentleman than the Dean of Darlington. From his youth upwards, he had been never known to inflict a wound upon the self-love of a fellow-creature—i. e., a fellow-creature in easy circumstances, or having a decent hold on the respect of society. His deportment was mild, his mouth mealy, his glance obsequious, his principles accommodating; he seemed to move on invisible castors, while the well-oiled hinges of his soul opened and shut as if by magic springs. His life, like that of Julius's decrepit grandfather, had been the life of the parasite. Educated to make learning a trade, both had dealt with knowledge as mechanically as tailors with the kersey and broad-cloth. But the scholarship of the Dean belonged to an age of higher refinement than had witnessed the birching of Dr. Spry. The private tutor of the eighteenth century was simply covetous; the private tutor of the nineteenth, ambitious. The one had been content to marry a governess, and drudge on in obscure pedagogueism, for the sake of amassing silver and gold; the other had attempted to place himself on a par with the society of the Castle, by uniting himself with an elderly spinster of honourable family, as an additional step in his progress towards the mitre.

The fat revenues of an episcopate were less, however, his object than the dignities of the apron and wig; the venerable pomposity of the emblazoned family coach—the spiritual peerage—the “my lording” of obsequious chaplains—and the senatorial voice which might do its part in dethroning kings and displacing ministers of state.

To secure his professional advancement had been the object of Nicewig's life from the moment of assuming the preceptorship of the grandsons of an Earl of Tiverton.

Under such circumstances, the advent of a clerical nephew at Tiverton Castle was an untoward event, and the prospect of having a right-earnest parish priest established so near the confines of his territory as Burthwaite, was sufficiently annoying; but to know him settled at the very Castle, to feel that a discriminating eye would henceforward be upon himself when performing Ko-Too to the Tiverton family, a learned ear on the alert when he was shooting his rubbish for the benefit of the dowagers at the Castle whist-table, was insupportable. The St. John of Helstone would doubtless confederate with his own half-starved drudge of a curate; would delight in laying bare the foundation-stones of the various dissenting chapels dotted over his neglected parish; would betray to light the hardness of his exactions, and descant upon the prodigality to which they were made to minister at the showy Rectory—anabode which, assuredly, no external evidence of manners or habits would have induced a stranger to suspect as the residence of a

minister of the gospel. Julius Egerton would, in short, be the mildewed ear blighting his wholesome brother parson.

Aware how readily the desiccated waste of fashionable life takes fire from any sudden spark thrown amid its fruitless stubble, and that of all epidemics none spreads so readily as the fever of religious enthusiasm, the Dean of Darlington doubted not that, on his next visit to the Castle, he should find family prayers thrice a-day, and Lady Tiverton and her daughters up to the ears in missionary tracts, and the clippings and snippings littered round—all habitual labourers in the flimsy field of charity bazaars. He accordingly set about circumventing the evil by the only means in his power—by poisoning against the supposed innovator the minds of Lord Egerton and his brother, with whom he was in occasional correspondence. Never having heard Julius Egerton referred to by his pupils, he concluded that the new rector of Burthwaite was wholly unknown to them; and, on pretence of inquiring from *them* the character of their cousin, took occasion to mention that the reports of Cambridge and Kent described him as “a saint;” a man exceedingly likely to trouble the faith of the ladies of the Egerton family, and to convert the Castle into a conventicle.

With Dicky Edge, indeed, the Dean of Darlington had little hope of success; as the dandy would have cared very little had it been converted into a mosque or a synagogue. But he was persuaded Lord Egerton would blush at the mere idea of his family mansion assuming so quizzical a cast. It had been heretofore his lordship’s comfort that, notwithstanding family discords and family embarrassments, Tiverton Castle retained a character of the most indisputable *ton*; and he had even expressed satisfaction to his quondam tutor that the rectory of Wyndham should be raised to a nearer level with his society, by being held by a dean; a dean, moreover, married to a woman who had nothing of the parson’s wife about her; a dean who had excellent claret at his table, and who, during the loose era of the regency, had been more than once seen under it. Nicewig was certain, therefore, that whatever influence the *protégé* of Silas Vivian might obtain with the Earl regnant, the Earl expectant must regard him with disgust; and it was scarcely before Lord Egerton’s accession to the family honours that Nicewig could form any reasonable pretensions to episcopate.

Having despatched his two Machiavelian epistles, the Dean felt that he might dedicate his finesse to the odd trick during the remaining two months of his residence at Darlington, little suspecting that by Dick Egerton his ex-tutor’s letters were invariably flung aside half-read, and that Lord Egerton, grateful for the disinterestedness with which Julius had forborne to profit by the Duke of Pelham’s invitation, and respecting in him a man whose preaching had been honourably mentioned at the Club—the *protégé* of a Silas Vivian, and the companion of a Lord Storby—was

well content that so reputable a connection of the family should have been adopted to do the disagreeable in his room, by undertaking the dirty work of affability at the Castle.

Wholly unsuspecting, meanwhile, that a mine had been excavated under his feet by a clerical brother whom he had never seen, Julius was unconsciously defeating the mischief, by the readiness with which he entered into the pleasures of the party assembled at Tiverton Castle. His spirits had already risen with the tide of his popularity. The accomplishments of his mind recommended him to the better order of his uncle's guests; the charm of his manners and person to the more frivolous; and, when occasionally obliged to absent himself for a few hours on his professional duties, he found his return greeted as triumphantly as if all the pleasures of the party depended upon his participation.

"I am *so* delighted that you are home early! I was *so* afraid I should not catch a glimpse of you before dinner-time!" cried Lady Tiverton, whom, on one occasion, he found in waiting for him in a rocky way forming the short cut from Burthwaite to the Castle; and, while Julius politely dismounted from his horse, the Countess resumed her hurried confidences.

"As you have been over to Burthwaite to-day," said she, "I trust there will be no occasion for you to absent yourself *again* this week? We *want* you here; we really cannot *spare* you at present."

"I understood from Lady Henrietta that Lord Holwell's family was expected at the Castle to-morrow," replied Julius, "or I would not have engaged myself to be at Burthwaite again on Thursday."

"On Thursday! Quite impossible! There can be nothing important going on at Burthwaite just now; or, even if there were, I could easily write to the Dean's curate at Wyndham. He is so near, that it will be very easy for him to get through any duty there may be for you to do. But I *want* you to ride with the girls every day this week!"

"I thought Mr. Flintham was to accompany his family?" observed Julius, inadvertently, not wishing the overtaxed drudge of the Dean of Darlington to be burthened on his behalf.

"Mr. Flintham! And what then?"

"Will he not ride with his cousins? When Lord Holwell's family was over at Tunbridge, Mr. Flintham was quite the rage as a lady's man."

"I dare say. A worthy beau for the Tunbridge belles! I remember hearing that he was going to be married to a hop-growing Kentish heiress, or something of that description."

"He was refused by the daughter of one of our country neighbours," replied Julius, coolly.

"Silly girl! John Flintham is exactly the match for the daughter of a country neighbour; one of the greatest bores with whom I am acquainted—the stupidest person on earth!"

"You surprise me ! Captain Heseltine, who entertained no objection to him as a son-in-law, used to proclaim him a most superior young man ; very learned, very "—

"Yes ; a learned blockhead !" impatiently interrupted Lady Tiverton. "Ismena at all times detests the very sight of him. But just now he would be a serious annoyance to her. In London, it is easy to shake a person off without compromising yourself," continued Lady Tiverton, while an involuntary smile brightened the eyes of her companion, at the recollection of his personal grievances of former times. "But in the country, in one's own house, there are certain claims which must not be evaded. John Flintham, for instance, has a right to fasten upon his cousins and bore them to death ; and God knows whether he is the man to forego his privilege !"

"Are Lord and Lady Holwell to remain long at the Castle ?" inquired Julius, somewhat embarrassed by her ladyship's confidences.

"They threaten us with a week. But, if my sister-in-law should happen to find the party pleasant, she will contrive to fall ill, and we shall have them on our hands for a month !"

Again, an involuntary smile crossed the face of Julius Egerton. "We have only then to conspire in being as disagreeable as possible, in order to ensure a speedy release to Lady Ismena," said he, cheerfully.

"The mischief will have been already done ! The Harleys remain only another week !"

Too polite to hint his inability to surmise what connection between the visit of the Harleys and Holwells was to produce mischief for Lady Ismena Egerton, Julius remained wonderingly silent.

"At all events," resumed Lady Tiverton, in a fretful tone, "promise me that you will draw off my nephew from the girls as much as in your power. Ismena wishes of course to be entirely with Lady Elizabeth during her stay ; and it would be provoking indeed for our projects to be defeated by an unprofitable bore, such as John Flintham."

Julius Egerton promised compliance. Lady Tiverton's peevish preamble having for a moment renewed his former distastes and suspicions, it was a relief to ascertain that his services were in requisition for no worse purpose than to secure to his fair cousin the companionship of a charming young woman. Yet for a moment, he had almost flattered himself that some matrimonial manœuvre on the part of the mother and daughter was about to set his conscience at rest relative to the engagements of Lord Storby ; and, when the Countess stood exonerated, he feared he might still have to answer for the defection of his friend the Viscount.

Egerton had even begun to distress himself lest Ismena should

entertain a more tender sentiment towards Lord Storby than he had at first supposed compatible with her nature and education. His regard for the younger sister inspired him with a favourable opinion of the elder. Henrietta was all gentleness and truth, in the estimation of her admiring cousin ; and he found it difficult to reconcile the virtues of so sweet a creature with the hollowness and corruption he had once attributed to the other members of her family. Even in favour of the Countess, did the graces of her feminine daughter plead for forgiveness. Like the Dauphin of France, when clasping his little hands in supplication to the people for the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, every look, every gesture, every sentiment of the gentle Lady Henrietta Egerton appeared to whisper with irresistible eloquence—" *Grâce, grâce, pour Maman !*"

There could scarcely have been a more unlucky hit on the part of Lady Tiverton than applying to Julius Egerton to make the agreeable to Lord Holwell's son. With the ready instinct of rivalry, Flintham had long attributed Miss Heseltine's refusal of his hand to the unavowed influence of Hurley House ; and was prepared to be as stiff and ungracious as the son of so good-humoured a man could venture to be in his father's presence.

"Well, my dear Egerton, so here you are at last, where I always wished you to be !" cried Lord Holwell, slapping Julius heartily on the back, as the gentlemen of the party lounged together in the billiard-room, previous to the ringing of the dressing-bell, on the day of his arrival.

"Thanks, in a great measure, to your lordship's kind offices," replied Julius ; who had not forgotten that the first suggestions to his uncle in his favour had proceeded from Lord Holwell.

"Thanks only to your own right, title, and merits," cried his companion, heartily. "Why, my dear fellow, *my* voice has no more influence at the Castle than that of the parish beadle ! What claims, pray, have I upon Henrietta ? My sons are not matches for her daughters ; and my girls are poor spoony things, not known by sight at Almack's. My country seat is in Tipperary, and my London house a lodging. I consider myself, in fact, a lucky dog that my sister has not dropped my acquaintance, as she has that of the rest of her Irish relations."

Not considering the billiard-room at Tiverton Castle a particularly eligible spot for a discussion of so delicate a nature, Julius attempted to divert the conversation by civil inquiries after Lady Holwell and her daughters.

"My daughters ! You didn't see the family coach arrive, eh ?"

"I am just returned from a sailing party on the lake with the Harleys and the rest of the party."

"I wish you joy. It is not every one who returns from darning the mountain eddies in a cockle shell, which (like a metropolitan district in election times) is sure to be *over-canvassed* ! Thank

you, my boy; I don't want you to laugh at my pun. It is enough not to have it sneered at, as my attempts at wit are apt to be by my learned son and heir. But you were inquiring after my daughters, I think? Conceive, if you can, my fatherly satisfaction at having settled four of the batch!—*Four!* While my sister, with all her tact, cannot get rid of one out of her two!"

Again, Julius Egerton felt that they were approaching a ticklish subject; and relieved his uneasiness by congratulations.

"Why, ay, as you say, for a thick-skulled Irishman, I flatter myself I *have* managed matters better than many a finessing dowager of St. James's parish! God knows, I should have had no wish to get rid of the girls, poor things! But with a nervous mother, who would as soon have put her head into a pesthouse as into a ball-room, all the duties of a chaperon, you see, fell upon my innocent head. Nine balls and four breakfasts a-week in the dog-days, my dear fellow! From hatred of foul air and confinement in hot weather, I had actually shirked being put up as a representative peer; and, after all, to become brood hen, and go about clucking for partners, with the thermometer at 90°, for half a dozen ugly daughters!"

"You are not over complimentary, my lord, either to the Misses Flintham or their father," said Egerton, puzzled in what tone to reply to this strange communication.

"Well, my dear fellow, I trusted to the fool's providence, luck, and was soon out of my pain!" resumed Lord Holwell. "To be sure, I had many chances in my favour. In the first place, the girls made their appearance in the world, bearing a banner round which silly folks are amazingly apt to rally! They were said to belong to 'a very united family;' just the sort of family that marrying men always flock to, in order that they may be *disunited*! But *that* was not all. Each of the Misses Flintham was a specialty: one was a saint, one a blue, and so forth. Now a specialty always finds its market. 'Most women,' as some rhyme-tagger or other sings, 'Most women have no characters at all,' and consequently make no impression at all. But people of strong tendencies are apt to pair off; and my saint accordingly found a serious husband, and my blue a learned pundit; while Ismy Egerton still remains confounded among the throng of handsome girls, who spin away their Wednesdays at Almack's, and toil away their mornings in the ring. I have got but two left; and as they are the last on hand, and a trifle better-looking than the rest, I think I shall raise my price, eh? My political-economy daughter is married to a Scotch member, with a castle on the Clyde, and four thousand a-year; I won't take any thing under five for Matilda and Jane. Matilda is a linguist, and would be the very thing for a secretary of legation with good interest and a chance of an embassy. Jane, was a little anxious about last year. She scarcely seemed to

know what to make of herself; and I was afraid Miss Jenny might turn out one of the indefinites, and hang on hand."

"Not likely, if I retain an accurate recollection of her sweet countenance," civilly interposed Julius.

"Nonsense, nonsense! all young ladies' countenances are sweet when they have got on their white satin petticoats and pearl necklaces. Sweet countenances are a drug! However, she has been only out a few months, and has taken it into her head to profess such a mania for western travel and eastern travel, and such vast curiosity about the Red Sea, and Black Sea, and American railroads, and the Great Western, that 'twill be a shame, indeed, if one of our yachting lords don't profit by the hint. If that crack-brained old Kentish neighbour of your father's, now, were fifty years younger, he would be the very man for her! But, for all Jenny's desire to visit Egypt, I don't suppose she would take unto herself a mummy, and as old as the Pyramids. By the way, that spirity girl of his who wouldn't have my son is still single, I fancy?"

"Miss Heseltine is still unmarried."

"Then why the plague, my fine fellow, didn't you bring her down with you to Burthwaite?"

"You are under a mistake," replied Julius, somewhat embarrassed, more especially on perceiving Lady Ismena Egerton just then sauntering into the billiard-room with Lady Elizabeth Harley, to witness the conclusion of a game finely played by her ladyship's husband against the Comte de Marnonval, one of a party of fashionable young foreigners on their road to the moors. "It is my eldest brother who is disposed to be a candidate for the smiles of Captain Heseltine's daughter."

"A defeated one, then, take my word for it," cried Lord Holwell, "should he ever come to the scratch and hazard the poll. No, no; I know what I'm talking about. The young lady and her couple of hundred thousand pounds were ready to fling themselves at your head when you were only a Kentish curate; and now—the dressing-bell, by Jove! A welcome sound after a sixty-mile journey in dusty weather. But I say, Egerton, my boy," continued his lordship, taking Julius by the arm as they quitted the room, "not a word here about the shop! Keep my matrimonial secrets, and I'll keep yours; or, faith, I may have two tall misses dowagering on my hands after all!"

Very little, meanwhile, did Julius Egerton suspect the advantage he had derived in the eyes of Lady Ismena, from the detached words she had overheard of her uncle's rambling discourse. From the period of that eventful conversation, she looked upon her handsome cousin as an engaged man, and assigned him all the privileges of such a position. It was no longer Lady Tiverton, but herself, who entreated him to secure her from the attentions of such or such an admirer, or rid her of the company of such or

accurate Mr. Flintham. "I have always understood that Count Zinzendorf"—

"Besides," interrupted in his turn Lord Holwell, who had long learned the wisdom of nipping in the bud his son's erudite harangues, "there is certainly something extraordinary in the wind. My sister hinted to me last night that she intended to establish family prayers at the Castle as soon as she had got rid of the foreigners who are just now in the house. Are *you* at the bottom of all this, pray, my fine fellow?" continued he, riding closer to Julius, so as to favour him, *en passant*, with a slap on the shoulder."

"I am not even in her ladyship's confidence," replied Egerton, somewhat startled. "Nay, though I consider family prayers an admirable institution when becomingly followed up, they could scarcely be appropriately introduced into the present system of society in my uncle's establishment."

"Spoken like a man!" exclaimed Lord Holwell. "To tell you the truth, I was half afraid, Julius, my boy, that you were about to come the new light over us, and that my silly sister and nieces were buzzing about it by anticipation."

John Flintham smiled sarcastically, muttering something about *any* light being preferable to utter darkness—an observation which neither of his companions thought it necessary to controvert.

"At present, I am a mere visiter at Tiverton Castle," resumed Julius. "With the spiritual condition of its inmates I could not interfere without impertinence. I am the appointed teacher of an adjacent parish, and should greatly exceed my functions were I to encroach on the privileges of the rector of Wyndham."

"All's right, then, I see!" cried Lord Holwell. "So much the better! Between ourselves, Ju, I had a hint from my nephews to look sharp after your proceedings during my stay at the Castle; some meddling blockhead or other having insinuated that you were likely to take upon yourself the reformation of the family, individually and collectively. It was in vain I assured them that you were one of the best fellows of my acquaintance; and though strict enough, *properly* strict, in your own pulpit and parish, most unlikely to intrude your professional opinions where they were not called for. But, by Jove! I was beginning to get frightened in my turn when I saw the changes which have taken place at Tiverton. Your best chance of preferment lies in propitiating my nephew Egerton; and I should be deuced sorry if any thing in your habits and opinions were to disincline him to plant you in Nicewig's shoes, when our friend the Dean progresses to the Bench."

"I have no pretension to succeed to the Dean of Darlington," said Julius, firmly; "still less, to forfeit my self-respect by sacrificing an iota of my sense of right in order to conciliate my cousin. At the same time, be assured that I shall never intrude my lessons upon those whose spiritual welfare is otherwise provided for, and

who are of an age to seek my advice were they desirous of obtaining it."

He was interrupted by the return of Mr. Flintham, who, weary of playing audience to a conversation into which he found it impossible to interpolate an argument, had been pursuing his geological discoveries in the mouth of a deserted slate-quarry bordering the road.

"I have it! How vastly fortunate! How extremely lucky!" cried he, while even Lord Holwell was surprised into giving him a moment's attention. "Did you ever see any thing more exquisite?" he continued, holding at arm's length towards his companions what appeared to their unlearned eyes a fragment of rubbish.

"What! that lump of chalk?" exclaimed his father.

"May I inquire, Mr. Egerton," said Flintham, addressing Julius, without condescending to notice his father's irreverent apostrophe, "*when* you intend communicating with your friend Captain Heseltine? I think I understood that you had undertaken to forward him certain choice specimens from the mines of Lancashire and Cumberland?"

"I am ashamed to say that I have hitherto neglected his commissions," replied Julius. "In the course of the autumn, however, I shall visit Kendal, Aldstone, and the mining districts. But even then I must depend on the information of others."

"In that case," cried Flintham, "you will not refuse me the satisfaction of acting as your substitute; more especially as, by the greatest good fortune, I have made a charming foundation for the collection in the exquisite specimen of *arragonite* on which I have just been so happy as to chance."

"You will oblige me much by your assistance. It will be a considerable relief to my conscience," said Julius, heartily rejoiced to effect Captain Heseltine's object in so satisfactory a manner.

"But you don't oblige *me*, I can tell you, by shifting the job upon my son's shoulders," cried Lord Holwell. "Our whole tour will be broken up to enable him to scour the country after a pack of paltry spars and crystals, good for no earthly purpose that I know of but to fit up a grotto in an inn-garden. Between the hammering over her head at night, and broken shins with the rolling of his stones in the carriage, his poor mother will go distracted! Besides, what is Captain Heseltine to you?" continued his lordship, abruptly addressing his indignant son. "You may store all the shelves in his museum, without advancing as much in his daughter's good opinion, as my friend Julius here by a simple 'good-day' whispered into her ear!"

"I entreat that your lordship will not misinterpret my zeal for the interests of science into any further views upon the affections of the young lady in question," observed John Flintham, assuming his stateliest attitude.

"I must also, once for all, my lord, request you to believe my assurance, that I have not the most remote pretension to Miss Heseltine's hand!" exclaimed Julius, at the same moment.

"Miss Heseltine's hand and the Eastwick estate, which I conclude it will carry along with it, are much indebted to your moderation, young gentlemen!" replied Lord Holwell, with his usual laugh. "Nevertheless, my dear Ju, allow me to observe that if the nutshell, surrounded with scaffold poles, which I espy under the screen of yonder rocks, looking out on a mountain tarn the size of a millpond, with half-a-dozen old yew-trees to the rear by way of plantation, be this famous parsonage of yours, I am of opinion that Eastwick Lodge, with 'one fair spirit for your minister,' would be a far more agreeable berth."

"You are not at present prepared to do poor Burthwaite justice," replied Julius, cheerfully; while Flintham affected to search after the diminutive dwelling through his eyeglass.

"By Jove! I would as soon pitch my tent in the heart of an Irish bog!" cried Lord Holwell, glancing over the cheerless district, where scarcely a patch of verdure afforded evidence of human habitation.

"Yonder rocks are of basaltic origin," observed Julius, anxious to do the honours of his parish, "and abound in crystals of garnet."

"A well-stocked kitchen-garden, abounding in early peas, would be a far more agreeable neighbour for you," was Lord Holwell's rejoinder. "Why, my dear fellow, the chances are that you will be found frozen to death some winter in yonder wretched doghole!"

"Burthwaite may have been comfortable enough for the last incumbent," replied Julius, undismayed. "But Lord Tiverton has really been most considerate; and, before next summer, the Parsonage will be a cosy, comfortable, little tenement."

"Ay, to make a rustic ornament for the chimneypiece of your commodious drawing-room at Helstone!" retorted Lord Holwell.

"*My grandfather's* commodious drawing-room," amended Julius, with a smile. "Dr. Spry enlarged *his* parsonage on speculation. Its size will hereafter prove encumbering to an incumbent who, like myself, shrinks, both as a matter of taste and principle, from uniting the trade of the schoolmaster with the duties of the church."

"Really when one commands a full view of the house, it is a vastly snug little spot," observed Flintham, still directing his eyeglass towards Burthwaite, having been considerably mollified in favour of Julius by the young rector's generosity in favouring his advances to the Heseltine family. "A most exquisite sight for a lover of the picturesque—a pleasant retreat for a scientific man."

"I am neither one nor the other," observed Julius. "But my pretensions have never been elevated beyond my sphere; and I

can picture life under yonder unpretending roof, as replete with enjoyment as ever was conceded to the prayer of man."

"Then, by the powers, my dear Ju, you are in love!" cried Lord Holwell, suddenly checking his horse, and directing towards his young friend as keen a glance as so rubicund a face could conjure up. "Hillo, hillo! blushing to the eartips at the mere instigation! What's the meaning of this? Neither your good father nor Miss Mary gave me a hint of your having left your heart behind you in Kent. I met them the day we spent at Eridge, on our road from Hastings to the north; and they seemed vexed, on the contrary, at the haste you had shown to get to your new living, which certainly did not look like a love affair at Helstoue. Come, out with it, my man! Not one of those tall, stately Misses Mitford, I trust, who are like effigies of Britannia on a new farthing! Your Helstone Park people—squire, baronet, what were they?—boasted, if I remember, neither daughter nor niece; and the Eastwick heiress you forswear altogether. Pray"—

"Your lordship must not lose the coup-d'œil of the beautiful mountain-landscape before us, for the sake of such fruitless conjectures," said Julius, gravely, as they overlooked the clear, cold mountain tarn of Burthwaite, surrounded by its amphitheatre of rocks.

"Pho, pho, pho! I came here to make sure that your kitchen chimney was built on a good principle, and your pig-styes in the best aspect; not, like Dr. Syntax, in search of the picturesque," cried Lord Holwell. "You must be even further gone in the dear delusion than I supposed, to see beauty in yonder naked crags!"

"*Sublimity*," amended Julius.

"Sublimity be bothered!" retorted Lord Holwell. "Do you suppose that the sublime and beautiful of this little icy hand-basin will preserve your Kentish Venus from chilblains the first hard winter? No, no, Ju; since you *have* been ass enough to fall in love—do the civil thing to your uncle and cousin, and persuade them to recommend Nicewig to the first mitre (Calcutta or Jamaica is in the market every six months or so); and don't let me hear of a Mrs. Julius Egerton till you are as secure of Wyndham Rectory as my brother-in-law is of Tiverton Castle."

Fortunately for the patience of the susceptible Julius, the attention of his companion was at that moment attracted by the sight of a small quadruped scudding through the gorse towards the lake, and the brute propensities of the sportsman burst out at once. Pricking up his ears like a terrier, Lord Holwell was after it in a moment—stoat, hedgehog, otter—no matter what; and John Flintham immediately seized the opportunity of apologizing to his companion for his father's extraordinary want of delicacy.

"An excellent person—a very well-intentioned man," said he, following the movements of Lord Holwell with his eye-glass, in the same supercilious attitude with which he had previously scr-

tinized the Parsonage. "You must pardon his uncouthness, Mr. Egerton. Mere Irish nature—mere Irish education ; total absence of delicacy, combined nevertheless with vast benevolence of disposition !" And Julius, to whom the conceited mutterings of the son were scarcely less distasteful than the coarse raillery of the father, had need of all his philosophy while congratulating himself on having so far obeyed Lady Tiverton's injunctions, as to have secured the young ladies a whole morning from the importunities of their uncle and cousin.

After supporting for another hour the lamentations of Lord Holwell at having ridden out unaccompanied by his dog Squib, and thereby lost scent of the only otter which had rejoiced his eyes for the last ten years ; and borne with Mr. Flintham's criticisms on the injudicious distribution of his Parsonage, and condolences on the savage wildness of his domain, Julius saw fit, when within half-an-hour's ride of the Castle, on his return, to pretend business with one of his parishioners, and diverge into one of the mountain defiles intersecting the Tiverton property.

He seemed to breathe more freely after having thrown off his companions. "They may talk of the dreariness of solitude !" said he, almost aloud, as he took his leisurely way along the valley. "They may pity the rector of Burthwaite as an exile from civilized society. But what weariness of spirit can exceed the irritability arising from the impertinence of such people as these ?"

It is not easy to surmount the pain of having one's weakness handled by the rude hands of a *mauvais plaisant* ! Poor Julius actually writhed under the mingled vexation and shame produced by Lord Holwell's bantering humour.

Yes—he was in love ! His petulance on hearing Lord Holwell's indelicate allusions—his distress lest the suspicions of the pompous Mr. Flintham should be awakened—his susceptibility—his emotion—the feelings which at that very moment caused him to raise his eyes towards the placid blue sky, and inhale with such profound inspiration the aromatic mountain air—*these* were the sentiments, *these* the sensations of a lover ! He must not mistake himself ; he must not remain blind to his own danger. He must no longer cherish the dangerous enjoyment of Lady Henrietta Egerton's society. Though Lady Tiverton and her elder daughter had such perfect confidence either in his insensibility or his discretion, as to allow them the privilege of loitering together morning, noon, and night, apart from the rest of the party, his prudence must teach him to forbear. Henceforward, whenever Lord Tiverton invited him to offer his arm to Henrietta in their exploring parties, as she was not strong enough to scramble about after the rest—or whenever Lady Tiverton begged him to persuade Henrietta to retire from the music-room to the cooler library, where the shaded lamps were less likely to increase her headache—

he must limit his compliance to the strict letter of the request, and make some early pretext for retreating from her side.

It was true there would be some difficulty in withdrawing from the friendly advances of one so gentle, so guileless, so ingenuous in her demonstrations of affection. Carefully as he had seen Henrietta watched in London by her mother and sister, at Tiverton she scarcely seemed to engage their attention. Lady Ismena's haughty eyes never so much as wandered towards her sister. Her whole time was engrossed by Lady Elizabeth Harley; and the hours spent by Henrietta and Julius Egerton in quiet conversation might have been extended to days without exciting so much as her notice. Nay, had she given the subject a moment's thought, she would have applauded the good-nature of Henrietta in throwing away her civilities upon an unprofitable cousin, and striving to make him feel himself less a stranger in the house.

"But all this must end?" was his reflection, as, giving the rein to his horse, he sauntered along the furzy meanderings of Burthdale. "Little did it occur to me last night, as I sat listening to her voice—that low but cheerful voice, able to lend a charm to even ordinary topics—little did it occur to me, as we sat together on the divan of the conservatory, inhaling the delicious fragrance of its thousand exotics, and talking of I know not what, I know not wherefore—little did I imagine how soon the danger of such indulgences might become apparent! If the family are blind to the consequences of such an intimacy, it is because they estimate my claims so low as to deem it impossible that Henrietta would favour me otherwise than as a matter of compassion. They trust me to approach her, as they would trust her music-master—her footman—her spaniel. They feel that she cannot be compromised by her familiarity with a poor parson cousin. At least, let me prove to them that the poor cousin has too high a spirit to take unfair advantage of their folly."

A happier view of the case presented itself to the excited mind of Julius, when at length he turned his horse's head towards the by-road leading from Burthdale to the Castle. Might he not under-rate his importance in the estimation of the Egertons? Though strictly justified in his assertion of having refrained from all spiritual interference with the family, the altered deportment of more than one of its members was apparent even to strangers; and might not his silent influence have sufficed to produce this salutary change? If so, how vast a step towards the object so dear to his hopes; and what encouragement to bear and forbear with the weaknesses of those whose wellbeing was so dear to him!

His final resolve, as he traversed the gateway of the Castle, was to order his proceedings with patience and prudence; refraining alike from an intimacy fatal to his peace of mind, and from so abrupt a retirement as might embroil him with his uncle's family, and render abortive his generous projects for their welfare.

The sage projects of Julius were favoured by the opportune arrival of an accession of guests. It was easy for him to assume a new seat at the dinner-table; for the one he was in the habit of occupying by the side of Lady Henrietta (the handsome Comte de Marnonval on her right hand being too intent upon the *entrées* and *entremets* to oppose any obstacle to their conversation) was appropriated by one of the new-comers, who seemed as much at home in his place as if he had never occupied any other.

Grateful to the stranger for sparing him a movement which Lady Henrietta could not but consider ungracious, Julius was enabled to take a deliberate survey of his successor, having contrived to instal Miss Flintham, of whom he elected himself the cavalier, precisely opposite to her cousin. But his curiosity soon merged in amazement. At the university, at Storby Castle, and more especially during his recent visit to town, Egerton had admired, rather with pity than indignation, the enervate aspect of certain of the dandies who replace the rampant *roués* of a preceding epoch. But among the most effeminate of the order, he had never noticed any thing so nearly approaching to the Cupid of a stage ballet as the pink and white gentleman, whose flaxen head, whiskers, and mustaches emitted their overpowering fragrance for the advantage of Lady Henrietta Egerton. The pearliness of his teeth, the liquid lustre of his blue eyes, the brilliancy of his redundant curls, were of course gifts of nature. But the delight taken in them by the fair stranger himself, was a weakness of his own acquirement; and the studied accents of his voice and lisping affectation so revolted the feelings of the manly Julius, that he hastened to open a conversation with the least tiresome of Lord Holwell's "specialties," in order to disguise his irritation.

"Where have I been this morning?" replied Jane Flintham. "I thought you knew that Ismy had insisted upon carrying us all to the opening of her new school-house."

"School-house? At Tiverton?"

"No, no; in the village. Lord Tiverton has promised to build her one next spring; meanwhile, he has given her one of the best cottages that happened to be vacant at Wyndham. Lady Ismena was anxious to get all the arrangements completed before the arrival of the Dean; being afraid that, as rector of the parish, he might take it into his stupid head to interfere, which was the cause of hurrying her a little. However, all is happily arranged. I believe the project never entered her head till within the last fortnight (since the Harleys have been here); and in that short space she has actually scrambled together a schoolmistress, twenty children, with a neat uniform dress a-piece, forms, tables, spelling-books, and samplers! This very day we set the machinery to work!"

"I am almost inclined to regret that Lady Ismena did not take

me into her confidence. *My* experience in such matters might surely have been some assistance," observed Julius, too much interested in watching the couple opposite, to concern himself very deeply at the mystery practised towards him.

"To say the truth, I believe Lady Elizabeth Harley suggested that it ought to be entirely Ismena's own doing; that she had better not place herself within the reach of interference, more especially as the Dean was pointedly left out of the question."

"Perhaps she was right," replied Julius, beginning vaguely to surmise that the influence of the grave Lady Elizabeth Harley, rather than his own, had tended to check the levities of Tiverton Castle.

"I wish, by the way, that Ismy had put off her ceremony till another day; for now, Sir Edwin is come, I suppose we shall have nothing but sailing parties," said the young lady; "and I should have liked of all things to ride over with you this morning to Burthwaite. My brother tells me you had a most delightful expedition—mountains, lakes, mines, cataracts, and all sorts of things!"

"The cross-road to Burthwaite commands some very beautiful scenery," replied Julius. "Perhaps on some future occasion you may do me the honour to ride in that direction."

"Our riding parties, I fancy, are at an end," resumed Miss Jane. "Of course, we shall never be able to get Sir Edwin away from the lake; otherwise, I should have been enchanted to accompany you. I understand the road across the mountains is delightfully bad—in some places obliged to lead your horse, and room for only one at a time; to say nothing of an enchanting ford, where three people have been drowned in the last five years."

"As there were no ladies of the party, we took the bridle road, which is certainly indifferent," replied Julius, with a smile; "though scarcely so terrible as Mr. Flintham appears to have described it. Burthdale is a pretty valley; but I think you admired it last week on our return from Ullswater."

"No, indeed; there has been no party to Ullswater since we arrived, which I think rather unkind of my cousins, Ismy being well aware of my passion for every thing of the kind! I could positively spend my whole life in travelling! Land or sea—railroad or steamboat—diving-bell or balloon—no matter how or what! How I do envy Mrs. Lushington and Mrs. Elwood those cuts across the land of Canaan; and what would I not have given to have shot the rapids with Mrs. Jameson! Have you friends, pray, among the settlers in Australia, Mr. Egerton? Can you give me any news of the last expedition from Hobart Town? You are to know that I have been trying to persuade papa to send out one of my brothers to New Zealand; and now, Sir Edwin is come, I shall try and enlist *him* as our advocate."

Julius, whose eyes, during this idle gabble, were ever and anon

directed to the couple opposite, did not experience sufficient interest in the affairs of the Flintham family, or the predilections of Miss Jane, to inquire into the name and nature of the "Sir Edwin" who recurred so often in her references. He was disgusted by the languishing inanity of the beau, and the encouraging smiles of the belle. The burthen of their conversation, however, reached not his ear. So low and plaintive were the tones of the new-comer, that Julius had no means of ascertaining whether the moral were in keeping with the physical; and even at the critical moment, when the withdrawal of the ladies after dinner usually favours the approximation of their worser halves, he found himself seized upon by his lively neighbour, the Comte de Marnonval, and in the Comte's volubility lost sight of the mysterious epicene.

The Comte and his two travelling companions, the Marquis de Vardes and Monsieur Vivienne, had stumbled in the course of their morning's ride upon West Hill; and were as enthusiastic in praise of its experimental farm, as they had been the preceding day in that of the princely stables and kennel of Tiverton Castle. There was no possibility of moderating their transports.

Marnonval was one of those modern anomalies and insufferable personages—a Parisian "sporting man;" talking second-hand Nimrod, and bearing with complacency the contusions and fractures inseparable from a very bad seat on horseback, for the glory of parading in the ears of the Jockey Club, on his return to Paris, his feats at Melton and on the moors.

In the Comte de Marnonval, a well-bred, well-born young man, not much more self-conceited than nine young Englishmen in ten of his caste, all this was either a false enthusiasm, or, at worst, a harmless affectation. But of his two satellites, Monsieur Vivienne, the son of a wealthy but low-born *agent de change*, cultivated sportsmanship at any cost by way of making his way into good society; while the Marquis de Vardes, a ruined spendthrift of high connections, cultivated it as a speculation. Vivienne, who thought it a fine thing to brag at his father's table of having hunted with the Duke of This, or shot with the Marquis of the Other, cared not at what price he purchased the distinction of fashionable companionship; while the sly Marquis took care to turn his folly to account, by borrowing his money for the purchase of English dogs, horses, and equipages, of which he was sure of disposing at a premium among the bulls and bears of Tortoni's, or the lions and tigers of the Café de Paris.

"How glad I am those cursed *parlez-vousing* fellows are going away to-morrow," whispered Lord Holwell to Julius, on whose arm he was leaning on his way to the drawing-room. "I can neither speak *their* gibberish, nor keep my countenance while they are murdering the king's English. Besides, their precious politeness has the effect of making me as savage as a bear. I should like to know what a man is to say in answer to those endless,

hollow compliments of theirs, about every thing and nothing at all."

"Marnonval is a gentlemanly man enough," replied Egerton; whose attention was directed towards the essenced youth, already occupying his accustomed place by the side of Lady Henrietta Egerton.

"Ay! I believe *he's* the best of the bunch," replied his lordship. "But I remember hearing Sir Gordon Hilfield, or some other of the fine gentlemen who play chorus to my nephews yonder at Crockford's, say that Marnonval, who brought good introductions to the London world, had much to answer for in having quartered the other two chaps upon society—the one being an upstart, and the other a downstart."

"An agreeable, lively, good-looking young man makes his own way," observed Julius; his eyes still wandering to the other extremity of the saloon.

"Ay, ay—among daughters in want of partners at Almack's, and mothers, of a flirtation. But fellows such as these neither flirt nor dance. *Their* business is in the stable-yard, the betting-room, the race-stand, the covert. Vardes and Vivienne have nothing on earth to recommend them, except to the horse-dealer or the gun-maker—bad copies of the detestable originals, who have turned Leicestershire into a bear-garden, and the London police-offices into a Star-chamber court!"

"Monsieur de Vardes belongs, I believe, to one of the most ancient families in France," observed Julius.

"Which does not prevent his making a trade of his skill in horse-flesh," interrupted Lord Holwell, contemptuously. "Your high-born Marquis, my dear fellow, is little better than a *maquignon*!"

An expressive look from Julius apprized him that the object of his vituperation was within hearing, engaged in listening to the conversation of the Comte de Marnonval with Lady Henrietta Egerton and the young gentleman in white jeans and kid pumps.

"*Mais, oui*; esselent sports!" was the Count's reply to some inquiry addressed to him by her ladyship's fair friend. "Dree hondert bress a day, *avec quatre canons*."

"Gad bless my soul! I had not the remotest notion that these people took fieldpieces to the moors!" lisped the white jeans, addressing Lady Henrietta. "Nautically speaking, I had no idea they carried their great guns into action for a mere field-day."

"You were much pleased, I fancy, with the Highlands?" said Lady Henrietta in French to the Count, who fortunately understood as little of foreign languages as he professed to understand much.

"*Mais, oui*! I found him wonderful curieuse, dat people, vid dere viskey and petticoat," replied Marnonval, wholly indifferent, like most of his countrymen, to the charm of the picturesque. "*La seule chose* of which I was complain myself in de Ighland, she

vas de eternal ren, ren, ren ; vat is call *parmi vous*, de Scotz miss."

"Aha, the Scotch mists!" exclaimed the white jeans. "I quite agree with Monsieur le Comte! In the Highlands, nautically speaking, the weather is, nine days in ten, demned ugly. Pray, were you in time for the Perth races?"

"Alas, no! I vas stay in de Castle of my friend, le Duc d'Amilton, *ou il m'est arrivé un petit accident*—a fall, in vich I break de knee of my 'oss and de bone of my collaire," replied the Count enchanted with his fluency in the English language.

"No seat at all, I'll lay my life," observed Lady Henrietta's friend aside to her ladyship. "These foreigners attempt to sail ten knots an hour with the tide in their teeth; and, nautically speaking, are capsized before they can manage to tack."

"Of all the sickening blockheads on earth, commend me to a yachting dandy!" cried Lord Holwell, shrugging his shoulders, and drawing away Julius Egerton. "This Sir Edwin Skiff, for instance, with his milk-and-water face, and scarcely the pluck of a school-miss, who fancies that because sailing is the go, *he* must needs figure in a pilot-coat like the rest of them; what the devil use he makes of his fine boat, unless to import his own eau-de-cologne, I can scarcely conceive. And then the women, prattling about his being such a manly fellow! It amazes me, I own, that a clever girl like Henrietta should throw herself away on such a fribble! However, Skiff has fifteen thousand a-year—an income which covers a multitude of—I wont say sins, for the fellow has not stamina for any thing of the kind—but a multitude of follies."

Julius's colour rose. It appeared impossible that Lord Holwell's expression should refer simply to the waste of an evening's conversation. The enervate being before him was probably the person to whom he had heard Jane and Mary Flintham laughingly allude, as "the horror of a *parti*, to whom my aunt is resolved to marry poor Henrietta." Sir Edwin and his fifteen thousand a-year accordingly failed not to put to flight his sage resolutions of the morning; and the moment an opportunity presented itself, through Sir Edwin's drawing off to the whist-table with the three foreigners, he resumed his usual place by the side of his cousin.

"Why did you not tell me you were going to ride to Burthwaite this morning?" said she, as if unconscious of his displeasure. "I should so much have liked to join your party!"

"Lady Tiverton might not have approved your riding with"——

"With my uncle and two of my cousins? You are quite mistaken."

"At all events, you would have been apt to regret the sailing party."

"We have always enough of that sort of thing; and now, Sir Edwin Skiff has made his appearance, we shall hear of nothing else. Sir Edwin is the last new member of the Yacht Club, talk-

ing nautically, of course, with all his might ; and, as every thing he does must necessarily be on a diminutive scale, I fancy our lake regatta will be the very thing for him."

"I could almost mistake you for Lady Ismena to-night," said Egerton, in a low tone.

"Indeed ! How have I deserved such a compliment ?" inquired Lady Henrietta, glancing towards her sister, who, in the full radiance of beauty, stood turning over a book of engravings for Lady Elizabeth Harley.

"I did not intend it as a compliment. I prefer you in your natural character. So much bitterness of speech does not seem to belong to you."

"No ! it belongs to Sir Edwin Skiff ; who contrived to make my dinner to-day pass less agreeably than it has done for the last two months," retorted Lady Henrietta. And the compliment, whether accidental or purposed, had the effect of sealing the lips of Julius Egerton. He was not made of stuff so stern as to be indifferent to the information, that his society was becoming indispensable to the happiness of his favourite cousin. During the remainder of the evening, unless when their *tête-à-tête* was disturbed by the entreaties of Monsieur Vivienne, who was an officious adorer of all earl's daughters that came in his way, that Milédi would join the Misses Flintham and the rest of the young ladies in the music-room, they enjoyed their usual happiness, talking of themselves to each other, as if neither of them had any other object or occupation upon earth.

"How strange are the habits of these English people !" observed Marnonval apart, in his own language, to the Marquis de Vardes. "Do but admire how our worthy hosts allow their daughter to be *affichée* by the attentions of her *petit cousin* ! *C'est indécent au suprême degré*. And yet what a fuss they make when any of these girls goes off with a man, or even form what is called a bad match ; though the parties have been conducting themselves with the grossest impropriety under their eyes for months and years before !"

"*Apparemment ce qu'on appelle ici* 'a little flirtation,' *ne compte pas* !" whispered Vivienne, joining in the conversation.

"Ah, that incomprehensible word flirtation !" rejoined Marnonval, shrugging his shoulders. "The more I study its meaning the more I am at a loss ! It comprehends every thing and nothing."

CHAPTER VIII.

A LETTER FROM HOME.

HOWEVER engrossed in listening to his lovely cousin, as she unfolded the resources of an elegant and not altogether uncultivated mind, Julius Egerton could not but notice, in the course of the evening, something unusual in the proceedings of the family. Lord and Lady Tiverton, who usually maintained towards each other the most well-bred indifference, actually walked together arm-in-arm into the conservatory, where they were seen engaged in earnest conversation ; and Lord Holwell, who with his usual defiance of etiquette chose to intrude upon their *tête-à-tête*, soon hurried off to the billiard-room, whither his lady, who was practising the self-denying virtues of homœopathy, was compelled to take shelter every evening from the fragrance of the *jardinières* adorning every other room of the suite.

Even Lady Ismena, instead of chaining herself, according to her custom, to the side of Lady Elizabeth Harley, took part in the family debate, and looked cross and anxious, like the rest.

"Is any thing the matter?" inquired Julius at length of Lady Henrietta. "There seems to be something unusual going on."

"I fancy so—but I am not in the secret," she replied ; and a suspicion immediately glanced into his mind that the mystery bore reference to herself. It was, perhaps, connected with the arrival of Sir Edwin Skiff—perhaps with her marriage? Yet the nautical hero was so little interested in the discussion, that having been unable, with all his skill in navigation, to steer clear of the advances of the Misses Flintham, he had allowed himself to be convoyed into the music-room, and was enchanting Miss Jane with his attempts at the "Bay of Biscay O," in a voice something between Incedon's and the chirp of a canary suffering under the influenza.

"The news, whatever it may be, that occupies mamma's attention," said Lady Henrietta, perceiving by her cousin's grave countenance that he was growing uneasy, "arrived this evening in a London letter. Ismena told me to ask no questions, and take no notice ; and I am therefore unable to satisfy your curiosity."

"Call it interest, not curiosity," cried Julius, amending the phrase. "Surely, you feel some anxiety yourself?"

"None, I assure you ! Ismena said it was nothing in which I had the least concern."

"But you are concerned in all that concerns Lord and Lady Tiverton," argued Julius, almost pettishly.

"My father and mother never consult a person so insignificant as myself; and, my advice and assistance being out of the question, it is useless to busy myself with conjectures, when at the fitting moment I shall hear all that it is advisable for me to know."

Julius gazed upon his lovely cousin in some envy of her placidity. She looked too pretty at that moment (her fair complexion contrasting with the sombre green of the Ixora beside which she was seated) to admit of his examining curiously whether her philosophy were a principle, or the mere result of temperament."

"Perhaps," cried he, startled by sudden apprehensions—"perhaps the letter received by Lord Tiverton was from Kent—from Hurley?"

"No," replied Lady Henrietta; "I am certain it related to affairs of his own."

And Julius, beginning to surmise that his uncle's discomposure might bear reference to his pecuniary affairs, which were notoriously embarrassed, felt that there might be indelicacy in pursuing his inquiries. He retired to bed, therefore, with his mind more occupied by the vision of a fair face, connected with a soft voice, gentle manners, and an amiable disposition, than with the family crisis which had brought about so unusual an event as a conference between the Earl and Countess, with Lord Holwell as the president of their council.

The following day was Sunday; when, in spite of Lord Tiverton's request, that Julius would absent himself as little as possible from the Castle, his duties at Burthwaite summoned him away ere the family breakfast.

It was, perhaps, as well that an invigorating ride through scenery of the noblest character should intervene between the solemn service claiming Julius's attention and the scene of enervation and folly he left behind. Slave as he was of circumstances, even *he* might have been too stirringly self-convicted, had he progressed at once from the stately portal of the Castle into the lowly temple wherein he was appointed to preach the excellence of Christian humility.

"I have no business at Tiverton Castle," was his reflection, as he caught sight of his little speck of a parsonage, basking in the valley. "I have placed myself in a false position; and come forth as a convicted impostor when I exhort these simple people, my parishioners, to the duty of casting aside all creature comforts and idle ambitions, in order to fulfil the injunctions of the gospel of peace. Were they to see their minister content with yonder humble roof, they might have faith in his words; but so long as I continue to revel in sensual luxuries, with no thought save for the vanities of life, they are justified in hardening their hearts against a religion whose advocate stands convicted of such arch-hypocrisy!"

Under the dominion of reflections such as these, and during the discharge of the solemn functions entrusted to his care, Julius was

full of those excellent intentions, which are said by the Portuguese adage to pave the ways of eternal punishment. He resolved to seize the earliest opportunity of renouncing the splendid pleasures which exercised so fatal an influence over his character. He would quit Tiverton Castle the moment Burthwaite became habitable. He would discharge to the utmost demands of conscience the duties he had taken upon himself. Example should be added to precept. He would eat his humble bread among his parishioners, and teach them to be patient and content.

These pious resolves, and the gravity of brow which they induced, lasted precisely till he found himself once more in the midst of the laughing, reckless crew, who hailed with joyous clamour his return to the Castle. Apprehensive of bringing his sacred calling within the lash of ridicule, he was careful to chase from his countenance all indication of the contemplations in which he had been engaged ere he rejoined the gay assemblage; and his voice, in parrying the flippant sallies of Lord Holwell, certainly bore little trace of the earnest intonation with which it had recently breathed in the ears of his ragged brethren at Burthwaite the promises of salvation.

"Ay, ay! I thought you'd take care to be back in time to say grace over the haunch!" was his lordship's greeting, as he joined the company of idlers on the lawn, (who, like the greater number of great people in great houses in England, on the Sabbath-day, looked exceedingly at a loss what to do with themselves without violating the great duty of their caste, "to shew an example to the lower orders.")

And though his lordship was good-natured enough to laugh at his own wit, so as to spare Julius all necessity for mirth, the dread of appearing grave out of place, the vulgar fear of being accounted professional, produced a hollow echo from his lips; for having discerned, out of hearing though not out of sight, the figures of Lady Henrietta Egerton and Sir Edwin Skiff seated on the smooth green turf, engaged in lively conversation, his presence of mind was already overthrown.

"We have been on the water," said Miss Jane Flintham, attaching herself to his side.

"A most exquisite morning! Quite another thing now Sir Edwin is come! I assure you, the way he manœuvred the boats would have done credit to the most experienced sailor; and if it hadn't happened that a horrible wind got up, which as nearly as possible capsized us, we should have had the pleasantest day that ever was! Shouldn't we, Lady Ismena? But I forgot—you were not of the party. Ismy dare not amuse herself of a Sunday just now, you know, in compliment to the Harleys!" continued the young lady in a confidential tone to Julius, as soon as her cousin, with Lady Elizabeth Harley leaning on her arm, had glided past them towards the house. "The Duchess-Dowager is serious; and

Ismy wouldn't have the least chance, if they were to see her usual ways of going on."

Just as Julius, albeit little inclined to provoke the loquacity of Miss Flintham, was about to request an explanation of these mysterious allusions, Lord Tiverton, with an open newspaper in his hand, made his appearance.

"I am sure strangers are expected, or my uncle would not shew us the light of his countenance before dinner-time!" said Miss Flintham.

"You forget that it is Sunday," observed her sister.

"And what then?—Lord Tiverton prevents people leaving the Castle of a Sunday, because it enables him to prose about the bad example of having post-horses ordered to his family place on the Sabbath-day, and sounds hospitable and in good taste. But when people, whom he has previously invited, propose *coming* on a Sunday, he can't say he won't have them, you know."

"Besides," cried Lord Holwell, who had again joined the little group—"the horses of those who arrive don't come from Tiverton's post-town; so his electioneering interests are not endangered. However, Jane, my dear, not a remark, I beg, about the guests who are to be here to-day! Your uncle has particular reasons for desiring that they may be received with the *utmost attention* by every member of the family!"

"For 'my uncle,' read 'my aunt!' for *when* did Lord Tiverton ever desire any thing, but to be allowed to eat, drink, and sleep in peace!" observed Miss Flintham; while her father, having uttered his oracular sentence, proceeded to give a hint of a similar nature to others of the party.

"Who on earth can these people be?" said her sister, turning to Julius for an explanation which he was unable to afford. "It can't be the Duke—because, even to run away from the cholera, his mother would never allow him to travel on a Sunday. It must be some heiress they are making up to for Egerton or Dick! I heard there was some Border Miss, with estates as large as the Duke of Northumberland's, whose guardians wanted to buy her a coronet."

"How imprudent, then, of Lord Tiverton to detain the three Frenchmen!" observed Miss Flintham, with a sneer. "Foreigners have a trick of snapping up heiresses like oysters. *There!* the dressing-bell, and no sign of visitors!" she continued. "By-the-way, it was shameful of my uncle to break up Marnonval's plans, on the plea of its being a sin to travel on a day when the legislature doubles the turnpike-tolls by the way of preventive, if he makes exceptions for countrymen of his own."

Julius was too much occupied in watching the gestures of Sir Edwin Skiff and his companion, to care much about the threatened addition to the party, or to sympathize in the wrongs of the Comte de Marnonval; and when he re-entered the drawing-room after

dressing, at the very moment the Misses Flintham glided in with sashes floating, ringlets flowing, or, as Sir Edwin would have nautically said, "streamers flying," for conquest, it was no disappointment to him to overhear Miss Jane ejaculate to her sister, "What a fuss about nothing! After all, these visitors are only those people from West Hill!"

It was clear, however, that in whatever contempt Mr. and Mrs. Vassyll might be held by Lord Holwell's daughters, they were objects of regard to the Earl; for scarcely had Julius appeared in the saloon, when he was beckoned forwards, and presented in form as "my nephew, Mr. Egerton of Burthwaite;" while the newcomer was named in return, in flummerying phrase, as "my esteemed neighbour from West Hill—our excellent county member;" upon which Julius, who had never before been involved in an introduction conducted with so much pomp and circumstance, bowed as low to Mr. Vassyll as he would have done to the Archbishop of York, and addressed him in a tone of the most reverential deference.

Though far from a competent physiognomist, Julius fancied he could discern in Lord Tiverton's countenance symptoms of satisfaction at the respect thus bestowed upon his guest; and he accordingly exerted himself at dinner, and throughout the evening, to conduce to Vassyll's entertainment. The lady was too closely surrounded by the Countess and the three foreigners to need his attentions; but he was careful to assist in doing the honours of the Castle to her husband.

Not that much effort was needful. Mr. Vassyll's conversation was that of an intelligent mind, active in yielding and seeking information. Subjects of local interest presented themselves, in which the young rector obtained from the member of parliament, knowledge which he had vainly sought from the inmates of Tiverton Castle; and, but for the restlessness of jealousy which carried the eyes and thoughts of Julius perpetually in search of Henrietta, he would have spent the most agreeable evening he had experienced since his arrival in the north.

It was some addition to his satisfaction to perceive, from the expression of Lord Tiverton's eyes, that the Earl was pleased with the animated part sustained by his nephew in conversation with a man of such acknowledged merit. Though his lordship took no active share in it, being at all times too indolent or too absent for colloquial effort, he smiled to see one of the representatives of his house exert himself for the entertainment of a man evidently so important in his eyes as "his esteemed neighbour from West Hill;" and as he passed Julius in the vestibule, when retiring for the night, condescended even to acknowledge his assistance.

"Thanks, my dear boy—a thousand thanks!" said he. "I was afraid the evening would go off awkwardly enough. The old fellow is such a prig, that I feared none of the set here would be

decently civil to him. But you have done all, and more than all, I hoped for. Vassyll is delighted with his reception. I know something of human nature ; and am convinced that the exemplary patience with which you listened to those crackjaw descriptions of the Colonial tribunals, has sent the old blockhead to bed in perfect conceit with us all."

On the morrow, Lady Ismena, to his great surprise, took an opportunity of expressing similar sentiments.

"You have exceeded our most sanguine expectations !" said she. "I can never sufficiently express how obliged we all feel."

"For what ?" inquired her cousin, fancying himself the dupe of a mystification.

"Without taking all the others into our secret, which would have been the height of imprudence, it was impossible to ask their assistance," observed her ladyship, mysteriously.

"At least, take *me* into the secret," replied Julius ; "for at present I have not the remotest suspicion to what you allude !"

"Hush, hush—not another word !" interrupted Lady Ismena, anxiously. "A single syllable must not transpire so long as the Vassylls remain here ; more especially in presence of my sister, who, of course, is ignorant of the whole affair."

Thus forewarned, Julius did not consider it justifiable to push his inquiries ; but he was harassed by these perpetual allusions to petty mysteries, in which he was supposed to bear a part. The Harleys and Vassylls seemed to be severally the object of some deep-laid scheme ; and perceiving that the opinion of the neighbourhood identified him with the family at Tiverton Castle, no less as confidential friend and adviser than as kinsman, he was not at his ease. Neither the Countess nor Lady Ismena were persons in whose projects he chose to be blindly involved ; and, if heretofore more indulgent in his judgment of the Earl, it was because he had supposed that the Earl had no projects in which to involve him.

On this point, his opinion was changed. Lord Tiverton's deportment towards Mr. Vassyll was evidently the result of predetermination. Julius had seen guests of every sort and degree, as regarding wealth and station, entertained at the Castle, to whom his uncle vouchsafed nothing beyond the courtesies of greeting, and the table ; remaining absorbed in his cares and pursuits, and leaving the ceremonies of hospitality to be performed by his family. But towards Mr. Vassyll, the Earl seemed to think it impossible to be too assiduous ; and Egerton's mind misgave him that the people of West Hill were not indebted altogether to the high importance of George Vassyll as a man of information, trust, and integrity, for the deference conceded to them.

In the lady, even in London, he had seen little to justify the admiration she was said to excite in the world in general, and Dicky Edge in particular ; and a more intimate survey left him less than

ever disposed in her favour. She was beautiful—there could be no question about that ; but something in her look and mode of receiving the homage of the three young Frenchmen was to *him* as the fatal spot upon the hand of Lady Macbeth—a blemish rendering even her beauties hideous. Not that there was any thing approaching to indecorum in the approaches of Marnonval or Vardes. But through all the affected deference peculiar to the address of the French libertine, was betrayed a sort of freemasonry, a mutual understanding, implying that the Rubicon was passed, and that she was recognised as one of themselves.

Julius had no leisure, however, for a deliberate commentary. There was at all times too much movement at the Castle for dwelling upon circumstantialities. Something new, something gay and exciting, was ever in progress ; and between the nautical enthusiasm of Sir Edwin Skiff, and the activity of the Misses Flint-ham, the lives of the Egerton family were just then so constantly endangered, as to keep him continually on the alert.

"That ere Lon'on chap will be the end of the young ladies !" was the private remark of the old Whitehaven boatswain, who for the last ten years had acted as commodore in the sailing parties of Tiverton Castle ; and Julius was too much alarmed by the hint, to take further heed of the Vassylls.

In the course of the day, other anxieties arose. The London post arrived at an hour which usually found the party assembled ; and the skimmers of newspapers were apt to communicate, for the amusement of the rest, any striking news of the day.

"Hillo—Ismena ! This concerns *you*, I fancy," cried Lord Holwell, with his usual unreserve, as he glanced over the columns of the Morning Post. "From Mivart's Hotel, Viscount Storby for the Continent. Eh ? Do you allow your fellows to break their chains in this uncereemonious manner ?"

"It is some time since Lord Storby wore any chain of my daughter's," interrupted Lady Tiverton, haughtily. "We expected to hear of his departure from England ; nothing was more likely—nothing, for his own sake perhaps, more judicious."

And in reply to some further jesting on the part of Lord Holwell, whom not even the majestic airs of his sister could awe to silence, Lady Tiverton gave it to be understood, as clearly as was possible without direct assertion, that the Viscount had been *refused* by Lady Ismena.

Julius rejoiced that, at the very commencement of the conversation, his cousin, annoyed by Lord Holwell's want of delicacy, had quitted the room. He could not have borne to find Lady Tiverton's disingenuousness avouched by even the tacit assent of her daughter. But neither Ismena nor Henrietta were present, and their mother enjoyed the triumph of persuading the Harleys, Vassylls, and the rest of the party, at the expense only of exhibiting a want of veracity, for which a housemaid would have been

dismissed her service, that Lord Storby had quitted England, driven to despair by the cruelty of Lady Ismena Egerton. Julius was deeply shocked at such an outrage of truth. How small must be the reformation he had effected, since so trifling a temptation could betray Lady Tiverton into a falsehood so preposterous!

He reverted, however, with still greater interest to the origin of her fault. Lord Storby leaving England—and without a word of explanation to himself! He had written only once, since Julius's instalment at Tiverton Castle, announcing that his visit to Tunbridge Wells was deferred in consequence of the dangerous illness of an only sister. Was he gone without having fulfilled his intentions, and justified the expectations of the family at Hurley House?

Julius was almost too much agitated to dwell upon the subject. It brought home to him with painful consciousness that, since his arrival in the north, he had been too remiss in communicating with his family. But this was in part the result of pique. His mother's first letter to him after his departure from Kent had been tinged with bitterness foreign to her nature. Mrs. Egerton, estranged for the first time in her life from her sister and father by the defection of her son, instead of examining into the merits of the case, visited upon Julius all the revilings of aunt Rachel. She did not scruple to assure him that the disturbance consequent upon his removal from Helstone, was likely to shorten the days of Dr. Spry as well as to sow discord between the two families; while Julius, too proud to vindicate himself, and too respectful to upbraid the partiality of his mother, remained utterly silent.

Even Mary, the gentle, simple, warm-hearted Mary, had given him offence, by repeating in her letters the lively sarcasms of Georgiana Heseltine, upon his wild ambitions, and instability of purpose; and, with the exception of a few lines from his father, communicating agreeable intelligence of John and Henry, and indited in William Egerton's usual happy strain of contented philanthropy, Julius had found nothing in the Hurley correspondence so agreeable as to call for a reply.

To his father he had written, in high commendation of his new position, and the flattering manner in which he was welcomed by the Egerton family; but guardedly as regarded matters of more intimate interest. For Julius was aware that his letter would be read aloud, first to the Hurley breakfast-table—next, to the parlour at Eastwick—and, finally, to all the tea-tables of all the cottages of gentility dotting with their tiny lawns the heathy environs of Tunbridge Wells; and he was consequently careful to refrain from all allusion to the perplexities of his situation, as well as from inquiries into the movements of Lord Storby.

He now, for the first time, remembered that this letter remained unanswered; and was beginning to tax himself with shameful indifference to the interests of his family, when he was hailed by

the voice of his uncle, who stood extending to him from the library door a packet which had arrived under cover to himself.

"I have a few lines from your father. All well at Hurley," said Lord Tiverton, hastily, as he gave it into his hand. And Julius was thus enabled to open his letter without further self-upbraiding. The preamble, however, was not of a cheering nature.

"You will be sorry to learn, my dear boy," wrote William Egerton, "that your grandfather remains in a very precarious way. Aunt Rachel pretends that it is all your fault ; and sad complaints of one kind or other reach us from Helstone. However, I don't believe half I hear ; more particularly as it is clear to me that your successor, Mr. Harrington, has got on aunt Rachel's blind side, and manages her as he pleases. In addition to this vexation, matters have not been going on lately at Hurley as I could wish. We are sadly in want of rain ; and you will grieve to hear that I have lost my favourite Alderney, poor Cherry, whom I had so much trouble in getting all the way from Southampton last year. The dairy misses her sadly ; and, what is worse, the poor creature actually fell a sacrifice to one of John Smith's blunders. I told him, the day she was seized, that her disorder was inflammatory ; but he would not hear of bleeding. Your poor mother was quite cut up for a whole week after her death !

"By the bye, my dear boy, this brings me to the more serious object of my letter. We are in great uneasiness of mind respecting your sister. All that you announced and your mother prophesied relative to the young Viscount, has come to pass. Lord Storby made his appearance at the Wells, some ten days ago, and was not long in finding his way to Hurley. The people hereabouts, and more particularly the Mitfords of Mitford, who were paying their annual visit at Eastwick, kept saying that he was come for the races ; and those two tall misses of old Mitford's laid pretty close siege to him, I can tell you. In compliance with my promise to you, I did not let fall a word ; but, even if you had not apprized me of his intentions, I should have seen from the first, with half an eye, that dear Mary was at the bottom of all.

"Well, after a day or two, he made so little secret of his views, that he was never out of the house ; and even Mary, backward as she is at all times in taking compliments to herself, could not but see what he was at. The moment the thing occurred to her, up she comes to her mother and me, as we were strolling along the paddock, just by the little gate, into the Eastwick shrubbery, (which poor John used to find such a sad temptation when he was here in the summer !) tells us all that was passing in her mind, and entreats me to prevent Lord Storby from mortifying himself by a proposal.

"I was really puzzled what to say ; for of course there was no further use in keeping the secret, and so I owned at once that she

had guessed right—that Lord Storby's intentions *were* to court her as a wife; and, having once admitted *that*, Mary was more positive than ever in assuring me the match could never take place. Persuade my daughter into a marriage contrary to her liking, is a thing I could not do, were the suitor a prince of the blood-royal. I *did*, however, ask her to take time to consider the matter, as there was no hurry till the proposal was actually made. But Mary would not hear of it! 'There was no occasion to take time,' she said; 'her mind was made up; and why expose a man, who intended so great a compliment to the family, to the humiliation of being rejected? My affections,' said dear Mary, with the greatest composure, 'are engaged, and engaged to a man who has no thoughts of seeking me in marriage. I know I shall not be pressed by my parents for painful explanations. I am doing my utmost to overcome an attachment which I know can lead to no good result; and therefore throw myself upon their forbearance.'

"Such, my dear Ju, is the cause of our anxiety. As to Lord Storby, nothing could be more straightforward than my task with *him*. I told him all, exactly as it had fallen out; and, after thanking me for my candour, he ordered post-horses, and was away for London in an hour. It cut me to the soul, I admit, to see how pale the poor fellow looked as he stepped into the carriage (for I made it a point of conscience to see him off). But, with the exception of a word or two that escaped him in reference to yourself (such as—that it was to be regretted you had not been more explicit with him—that much pain and disappointment might have been spared by an earlier explanation—and that his hopes of happiness were destroyed for ever), he did not seem to resent Mary's decision.

"But as regards the poor dear girl, we are thoroughly at a loss. Livy will not have a word said to her; and yet both she and I are at our wits' end to guess what Mary can mean by saying her affections are engaged. I almost hope it may be a phrase she has caught up from her friend, Georgy Heseltine; for girls never exactly know how to refuse a first offer, and seldom give their real reasons. But, then, what but a pre-engagement of the affections could induce your poor sister to reject such a match; and when, from her childhood upwards, did Mary, even in jest, assign any other motive for her conduct than the true one?

"Can you, my dear boy, help us out of our dilemma? I will not do my daughter the injustice to surmise that she has entrusted to *you* a secret she will not confide to her mother. But young people are closer to each other than they are to their parents; and you can perhaps afford some little clue to our guesses.

"Under any circumstances, Ju, pray write soon. We don't hear from you so often as we ought. It is not that we have any reasonable right to feel anxious about Mary. The girl's health is good—she eats and sleeps as usual—and is at all times so mild

and gentle, that 'tis difficult to guess when she is out of spirits. But when once such affairs are of a nature to be made a mystery, there's no guessing, my dear boy, where the mischief may end ! Say nothing when you write about poor Cherry, because it makes your mother low to be reminded of her ; and it is very vexatious that Captain Heseltine never fails, when he drops in, to inquire about the beautiful sheet Alderney, whom he misses from the paddock. But there is no being angry with poor Heseltine ; he is such a kind friend and good neighbour, that one is ready to overlook all his little oddities. Your mother joins in love with, yours, my dear boy, very affectionately, W. S. EGERTON."

Simple as was the tenour of this letter, Julius had no sooner read it to an end, than he recommenced the perusal ; trusting that a second reading might obliterate the vexatious inferences of the first.

But no !—Reconsideration of the case brought the same conviction—that there was only one person likely to have won the affections of poor Mary, whom prudence and self-respect forbade her to name—that *one* being the last man on earth to whom he was disposed to entrust the happiness of his sister. Julius humbly hoped it might prove otherwise. He trusted he might be mistaken. Meanwhile, a sharper thorn was added to the combined vexations which impressed so vivid a flush upon his cheek, when he appeared in the dinner-room to assist in doing the honours of Tiverton Castle.

On that occasion, more especially, the task of Julius was no sinecure. It was one of those gaudy days at the Castle, which enabled the baronets and esquires within ten miles' distance to ascertain whether venison ate as well off gilt plate as silver or pewter, and to compare the prize pine-apples of an Earl with their humble pippins. The Waltons and Davises, with a due compliment of Smiths and Browns, formed the party of three dozen, assembled to tax the affability of Lady Ismena, and the indolence of her sister ; and Julius, having heard it whispered by Lady Tiverton to her brother, as he reached the drawing-room, that the whole neighbourhood was invited to meet the Vassylls, could not help fauicying that the people at West Hill would have been just as well amused by dining in company with the Harleys, Holwells, and the young men who completed the coterie in the house, without having to admire, for the thousandth time, Mrs. James Davis's set of turquoises, or listen for the hundredth, to Mr. Walton's account of a royal progress through the county which occurred during his shrievalty.

He was struck, however, by the deference with which these people deported themselves towards George Vassyll. Though one and all returned with interest the contempt in which they were held by his fashionable wife, they seemed to value the solid worth of the useful magistrate and hospitable host of West Hill.

A remark to this effect, which he hazarded to John Flintham, in whose vicinity he found himself after dinner, elicited from the solemn fop one of those bitter sneers so successful in freezing all further attempt at conversation. But Julius was puzzled to guess whether Flintham's contempt were elicited by Mr. Vassyll, or by his own high appreciation of that gentleman. It was unlikely, indeed, that he should surmise the real purport of the young gentleman's grimace—namely, “Don't waste your hypothesis upon *me*; I am in the plot as well as yourself.” For Julius, *if* in a plot, had enlisted blindfold; and was consequently impenetrable to the irony of his fellow-conspirator.

“It was unlucky enough,” continued Julius, as if, in spite of Flintham's superciliousness, resolved to persist, “that the Vassylls should have been absent when Marnonval and his friend visited West Hill. The Count was in raptures with the experimental farm; and I fear I proved a most incompetent *cicerone*. One is willing that foreigners should see the best of us, and see it in the best way; and I understand Mr. Vassyll is the first agriculturist in the county, and his farm a highly valuable school of rural economy.”

“I give up the point to you! Well as I wish Dick Egerton, I own I am not equal to such partisanship as this!” was the enigmatical reply of Mr. Flintham; and as, at the close of his mystification, he glided off to enter into conversation with Lady Elizabeth Harley—who looked about as conscious of what was going on at the Castle, as a specimen figure placed at the door of a show of waxwork of what is passing within—it was useless to hope for an explanation at her hands.

Ere he had ceased to wonder at Flintham's mysterious impertinence, Lady Ismena, who had ceded her place beside Lady Elizabeth to her country neighbour, and for the first time during her ladyship's stay at Tiverton allowed herself to turn her attention to the other guests, addressed him with an entreaty, the tremulous earnestness of which was wholly inexplicable, that he would go and talk to Mr. Vassyll.

“Mr. Vassyll is discussing parish business with his neighbour, Mr. James Davis of Hillingdon, and I fear I should find myself in the way,” replied Julius; “for I am still too great a novice in the affairs of the neighbourhood, to be admitted into so grave a conclave.”

“But the Davises always go away early, (*ils ont cela de bon!*)” replied Lady Ismena; “and, should old Vassyll's attention be a moment unoccupied, he will certainly see through the whole affair!”

“Through what affair?” inquired Julius, who was now on sufficiently good terms with his cousin to presume to ask questions.

“He will perceive that not one of these tiresome women have opened their lips to Mrs. Vassyll since they entered the house!”

"She is not popular, perhaps, among her country neighbours?" replied the unconscious Julius.

"Of course not—such a horrid set as they are! But her unpopularity in general is nothing to the purpose; only just now, it is of course indispensable that they should be decently civil to her."

"Surely Mrs. Vassyll may dispense with their civilities, while she receives such marked attentions from Lady Tiverton and Lady Holwell?" remonstrated Julius.

"Mamma is in her own house, and has no alternative; and Lady Holwell is one of the family."

"But Lady Elizabeth Harley?"

"Oh! poor dear Lady Elizabeth has not the remotest suspicion on the subject. *Her* civilities go for nothing. Every body is aware that Lady Elizabeth Harley is the last person in England to be *au fait* to the scandals of the day. All these Waltons and Davises know as well as I do, that *she* never looked at a Sunday newspaper in her life, and conclude she sins through ignorance. *Her* conduct affords them no precedent; and, they are carrying the thing so far, that I am in agonies lest old Vassyll's attention should be awakened!"

"But surely"——

"Hush, for goodness sake, hush!" whispered Lady Ismena; "he is coming this way." And Julius, attributing her ladyship's excitement to amiable anxiety for the peace of mind of a friend, endangered he scarce knew how, resolved, though still completely in the dark, to fulfil her wishes as far as in his power, by entering into a political discussion with Mr. Vassyll. He knew that, while talking politics, no Englishman on earth is capable of abstracting his attention for even a fact so salient as the sending of his wife to Coventry!

Egerton could not but admire, amid his flutter of spirits, the serenity of Mr. Vassyll. There was something in his mild self-possession, his rational patriotism, that seemed to raise him immeasurably above the level of such paltry dissensions as those by which his domestic peace was supposed to be menaced. He stood out in fine relief from the surface of the insignificant society which had erected itself into a tribunal of judgment upon his affairs; and Julius had not listened ten minutes to the arguments which enforced his mild philosophy, before he felt grieved that the happiness of such a man should lie at the mercy of those so miserably his inferiors. Whatever might be the circumstances involving his respectability, Julius was prepared to do his utmost in warding off the blow from so noble a heart.

Lord Tiverton, meanwhile, was not remiss in attentions to his "excellent neighbour of West Hill;" and Egerton soon found himself at liberty to seek consolation for the cares of the day where he was most in the habit of finding it—in unmolested con-

versation with his cousin Henrietta, after she had made her parting adieux to the last detachment of country neighbours.

"They are tiresome enough," said she, as the door closed upon the Davises; "but luckily we do not see much of them. They live so far off, that though they travel seven miles and back again to dine at the Castle, we are not bored with their company more than a quarter of that number of hours. But what makes you look so grave?"

"The recollection of your *empressement* in wishing them good-bye."

"I was overjoyed at the prospect of getting rid of them."

"You tried at least to make them believe that your joy arose from the opportunity of seeing them here."

"Are you going to quarrel with me for complying with the common forms of politeness?" said Lady Henrietta, good humouredly—"with me, whom all the family accuse of being so ungracious!"

"I prefer ungraciousness to hypocrisy," said Julius, firmly. "Truth is to me the most beautiful of virtues! In a woman, I hate even those changes and inflections of voice, which prove that in the intercourse of society she is acting a part."

"I am too lazy, if not too frank, to be much of an actress," replied Lady Henrietta, smiling at the earnestness of her cousin's lecture. "But though I allow you to take me to task when really in fault, on the present occasion your sermon ought to be addressed to Ismena, who is so much more addicted than I am to the courtesies of life."

"If I were equally interested in her reformation," faltered Julius, in a lower voice.

"She is at least a disciple who would do you honour! I, who desire only to pass through life unnoticed, uninjuring and uninjured, provoking commendation as little as blame, shall never yield you much credit."

"You might yield me unspeakable happiness!" escaped the lips of Julius Egerton, whom this avowal of the moderation of Lady Henrietta's ambitions and the contemplation of her soft but expressive countenance, seemed to transport out of himself. "You might convince me that my mission here is not wholly valueless," he continued, checking his impetuosity, "by accepting my humble guidance among the temptations of social life. But, pardon me! As Lord Holwell the other day reproached me, I am preaching out of place."

"No!" interrupted Lady Henrietta. "No admonitions with which you favour me can be ever out of place; and I am grateful for even the reprovals which raise me in my own opinion. Till you came here, no one condescended to address me as a rational being. My brothers consider me too insignificant even to condemn; and mamma seems to be deferring my reformation till

Ismena is settled and away. But, alas ! I fear I am growing too old for amendment."

"Heaven grant it !" was her cousin's fervent reply. "May Lady Ismena never quit Tiverton Castle, if her marriage is to be the signal for her sister's introduction into the mysteries of fashionable life."

"Then, why," inquired Lady Henrietta, a gentle tinge becoming visible on her pale cheeks, "why have you been doing so much to forward her plans with the Harleys?"

"I forward Lady Ismena's plans?" cried Julius, wondering what new accusation was about to be brought against him; "and plans involving the Harleys?—People with whom I am scarcely acquainted! *What* can you mean?"

"You know at least that Lady Elizabeth is sister to the Duke of Dumbarton, and that mama is bent upon having him for a son-in-law."

"So little, that I always fancied Lady Tiverton was desirous of seeing Lady Ismena married to my friend Storby."

"*Mais c'est de l'histoire ancienne!*" cried Henrietta, smiling. "Surely you were in London when the Duke arrived from Oxford? No! I remember—it was a few days after your return to Kent, that Egerton brought him to St. James's Square. Ismena instantly enlisted him among the raw recruits, her adorers; at first as a joke, because my uncle Holwell was always prophesying that his mother and sister (both of whom are what is called 'serious') would interfere to prevent his entering our family; and at last, I believe, because flattered by the handsome manner in which the family disproved the correctness of my uncle's assertions."

"But surely the Duke of Dumbarton is several years younger than Lady Ismena Egerton?" said Julius, in some surprise.

"Four or five. But being an only son, young as he is, his family wish him to marry; and, were his duchess of an age suitable to his own, the happy couple would be too young to place themselves suitably at the head of so vast an establishment as that of Dumbarton Palace."

"Lady Ismena is doubtless thoroughly accomplished to do the honours of such an establishment," observed Julius, gravely. "She seems expressly qualified to occupy such a position in society."

"So every one appears to think. Before we left town, Dumbarton all but proposed; and it was settled that his mother, who, as sole guardian of his minority, has hitherto resided at the family place in Dorsetshire, shall visit us with her son on their way to her dower-house in the north. Mama and Ismena consequently think of nothing, just now, but the Dumbartons."

"It would unquestionably be a brilliant match for your sister," said Julius, musingly. "Yet I should scarcely suppose Lady Ismena likely to fulfil the exactions of such a family."

"If once settled among them, her influence would carry every thing before it. Ismy, you know, always contrives to have her own way."

"Which the Dumbartons may perhaps discover in time to prevent the connection."

"No fear! See how thoroughly she has succeeded with the sister. The Harleys are quite fascinated by her attentions."

"The Harleys are not very wise. A mother would have more discrimination."

"You speak as if you did not wish the project to prosper?" said Lady Henrietta, in a tone of resentment.

"I am no advocate for matrimonial speculations," replied Julius. "There is something revolting to my sense of decency in such manœuvres."

"There is no manœuvring in the case! Nothing can be more straightforward than the whole affair. The Duke is in love with my sister, and the match suitable on both sides. What can be more natural than that mamma should wish to secure the happiness of her daughter, by trying to conciliate the family?"

"But if there be, on the part of those concerned, a pretence to certain habits and opinions, with the express view to deceive—if a temporary strictness of decorum is to be assumed, in order to cajole the Duchess of Dumbarton"—

"It would be charitable to suppose that the influence of a family she respects, has rendered Ismena more serious," replied Lady Henrietta, with an air of displeasure. "You taxed me just now with bitterness. What makes you, my dear cousin, so unusually malicious!"

"Perhaps," replied Julius, with a ready smile, touched by her earnestness in her sister's behalf—"perhaps I am not inclined to regard too favourably a marriage that leaves Lady Tiverton at liberty to bestir herself in behalf of the destinies of her second daughter."

"Not yet, at all events!" cried Henrietta, colouring deeply. "I am too young, thank goodness, to have my present tranquillity of mind disturbed. The day I leave Tiverton," she continued, with an air of deep emotion, "will be a heavy day to me! But they have promised me a long reprieve, 'a year's freedom. It will be time enough to bemoan myself when I find my turn approaching."

"Then I am more fortunate than I dreamed of!" said Julius, with a degree of emotion as frankly manifested as her own. "Time is a worker of wonders; Heaven knows what in the interim may come to pass; and the prospects of a year's happiness ought, at all events, to content any mortal of reasonable pretensions."

Though but a few hours before he had admitted, in his self-communing, that his position at Tiverton Castle was one fraught with danger for himself, and calculated to place his weakness

his conscience perpetually at war; yet as he listened to Henrietta's gentle confidences, and thrilled under the influence of her affectionate smiles, he felt his whole happiness to be concentrated under the roof uniting him in kinsmanly regard with the object of his dearest affections.

"How dull the party has been to-day!" observed Lady Henrietta; conceiving from the looks and tones of her cousin that it might be desirable to change the subject. "I am sure Mrs. Vassyll is the cause of it all. She plays fine, I fancy, with her country neighbours, for none of them seem to like her."

Julius was silent. It was the last subject on which he wished to enlighten the mind of his fair and innocent cousin.

"On that point, I quite sympathize with the Waltons and Davises; for she is no favourite of mine," resumed Henrietta. "You said just now you hated to hear a woman betray artificial intonations of voice in addressing different persons. What must you feel towards Mrs. Vassyll, whose very words and movements seem the result of calculation! I have seen her quiet and agreeable half the morning; yet the moment the gentlemen came in to luncheon, grow so affected as to be really odious."

"Mrs. Vassyll is probably one of the thousand women intended by nature to be charming, but trained by a bad education into the disingenuous habits of society. You are ungrateful, however, to find fault with her, my dear cousin, for I have seen Mrs. Vassyll pay you a most assiduous court."

"Have you noticed it?" cried Henrietta, blushing and laughing. "I am afraid you watch me a great deal too closely. She certainly does include me in her unaccountable adoration of the whole tribe of Egerton; but, somehow or other, I am invariably disgusted by exaggerated attentions. But Ismena is looking reproachfully towards us. We ought to be in the music-room, doing the civil thing to my cousins; for the Harleys are not fond of music, and my sister cannot leave them."

"Miss Flintham and Sir Edwin Skiff seem quite content to be together," said Julius rising and following her, "without encroaching on your attention."

"They would make a charming couple, would they not?" cried Henrietta, laughing. "Nautically speaking (as the gentleman says), I really think they are worthy of being spliced."

"A few days ago, it would have been a great relief to me to hear you jest on the subject!" cried Julius, gaily. "I fancied—I scarcely knew why—that *you* were the pole-star of Sir Edwin Skiff."

"I?" cried Lady Henrietta, stopping short as they entered the door-way of the music-room together, so that her expressive eyes beamed full in the face of Julius. "You surely cannot have imagined me capable of liking such an amphibious insect as the hating dandy?"

"You see that I am learning to appreciate the value of a good match!" retorted her cousin, still bending his impassioned glances upon her.

"You ought to be well aware that I, at least, am no longer an object for matrimonial speculations!" replied Henrietta, with a vivid blush and gentle sigh. "My destinies are appointed!"

Unable to divest himself of the rash hopes suggested by her manifest confusion, Julius presumed to regard this mysterious declaration as an indirect avowal of preference. All rejoinder, however, was impossible. Every finer sentiment was put to flight the moment they entered the music-room, where the two Misses Flintham were diverting themselves to their hearts' content with the yachting dandy, after a common fashion of flirting young ladies—by chatting and giggling round the piano, on which, every quarter of an hour or so, a bar or two was played, as a pretext for remaining apart from the rest of the party. They talked and laughed, and laughed and talked, without intermission; affecting to make a butt of Sir Edwin for the amusement of the three or four other young men with whom they were coquetting, who were in reality making a butt of themselves.

"We are projecting a cruise in the Baltic," said Sir Edwin, the moment Lady Henrietta made her appearance. "Wouldn't it be delightful to visit Norway, and import a cargo of tar for one's own consumption?"

Julius, as he stood aloof contemplating the motley group, could not but admire the contrast it afforded to the gentle deportment and elegant appearance of his cousin. Attired in a simple white dress, and devoid of all ornament but her glossy hair, Lady Henrietta, with her diminutive head, low voice, slender waist, and graceful throat, was always distinguished from the common herd of dressy young ladies. Lord Holwell had once remarked to him—"Ay, ay, Henny will do well enough when my sister has leisure to smarten her up, and make her like the rest of the world." But Julius was of opinion that, to make her like the rest of the world, would be to destroy the greatest charm of the lovely recluse.

He retired to rest that night, if not happy, bewildered by vague anticipations of happiness. Hurley was forgotten—Burthwaite forgotten—Mrs. Vassyll and John Flintham forgotten. In the wild delusions of awakening passion, even persons so highly gifted as Julius Egerton are apt to exclaim with the hyperbolist in the play, "Let heaven kiss earth;" and to care very little what may be the results of the salutation to the population of the inhabited globe.

Pleased with the unassuming manners of young Egerton, and anxious to cultivate the acquaintance of a man likely to remain so long his neighbour as the new rector of Burthwaite, Mr. Vassyll, before quitting the Castle, insisted upon engaging him to spend a few days at West Hill.

"I entreat you, my dear Julius, don't refuse!" whispered the Countess, who happened to overhear the invitation; and Julius, though reluctant to absent himself for even so short a period from the spot, becoming every hour more precious, was conscious that it might be as well for him to break through his gentle bondage for a time. He fancied that, once beyond the pale, he should regain his powers of judgment, and see in a clearer light the urgencies of his perilous responsibilities.

No sooner, however, did he reach West Hill, than he was disagreeably impressed by the difference between the easy good breeding of such a house as Lord Tiverton's, and the restraint produced by the exaggerated politeness of an under-bred man. Mr. Vassyll, compassionating his embarrassment as a stranger, would not leave him a moment to himself. He was not to be let off a single acre of the experimental farm; and Julius was painfully reminded of his father's fussy hospitality and emphatic monsterring of nothings, by the officious good-nature of his host, in dragging him over his own offices and the various institutions of the village. Egerton was angry with himself for being disgusted at what was merely a fault of manner in a superior man; for he was forced to admit the excellence of all he saw, and the wisdom by which every thing around him was governed. But then, how great an influence has manner, as an indication of moral nature, in the judgment we form of our associates!

He was, if possible, still more displeased by the profound deference expressed by Mr. Vassyll towards the family at Tiverton Castle. Julius had imbibed the highest opinion of Vassyll from his sentiments and conduct as a public man; and had no patience to hear him talk thus reverentially of Lord Tiverton, merely because he was an earl who condescended to be on familiar terms with him; or to find him lavish his eulogies on such tinkling cymbals as the Countess and Lady Ismena Egerton.

"I earnestly trust her ladyship may form a happy marriage," said Mr. Vassyll. "So tender and anxious a mother as Lady Tiverton, deserves to see her children satisfactorily settled in life." And, while Julius felt that the good man was squandering his sympathy to very little purpose, he fancied he saw a contemptuous glance traverse the countenance of Mrs. Vassyll.

"Nothing can exceed the attention we have received from the whole Egerton family," resumed Mr. Vassyll, with striking *bonhomie*. "Arriving here as we did, unknown in the county, and without the passport of birth or distinction to his lordship's good opinion, I confess I am greatly flattered by his neighbourly kindness. I can perceive that it excites the envy of the Waltons and Davises. But one must make allowances for little jealousies of that nature, more especially when the evil is balanced against the many advantages we derive from our intimacy at Tiverton Castle."

In pity to the lady, Julius did not raise his eyes towards her,

and he had consequently no opportunity of determining the extent of her *sang-froid*. Luckily, the entrance of the children interrupted the conversation—a lively boy and lovely little girl, objects of passionate affection to their father. He was unpleasantly struck, however, by something inexplicable in the deportment of Mrs. Vassyll towards them. The same abruptness, the same reckless impatience, which marked her conduct in all other respects, modified even her endearments to her children. In spite of her studied court to himself, Julius was from the first disposed against the pseudo fine lady of West Hill; and he began almost to dislike her when he saw that the peevishness with which she complained of the dulness and insupportableness of West Hill, did not yield to the caresses of her prattling girl and boy. Nothing in this world appeared to give her pleasure; and what satisfaction others derive from the presence of a person thoroughly discontented?

Yet, however small her attraction in his eyes, he saw her excellent husband she was all in all—the idol of the crown of his prosperity. Poor Vassyll's pride in Anna was still undiminished. He heeded not her murmurs; was patient with her frowardness as a spoiled child; and seemed anxious only to amuse her for an unamusable nature.

"That is the worst of London and Londoners," said Vassyll, one day to his visiter, after he had retired from the room, as if conscious of the necessity of an apology. "As novel-reading and dissipation renders the countenance of my wife, it is my rule, therefore, to allow her for things to fall into their hands, and let them have their charm. Come, Mr. Egerton, and see the blazing fire."

Julius regretted that for a secret visit to West Hill he had received from Mr. Vassyll had a (though occasion sore-th Castle in arm and man victimization hear the all Mrs. Vassyll in

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Julius indignantly, perceiving that she
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by way of precedent and excuse for the renewal of their visits to West Hill.

That Mrs. Vassyll herself was alive to the insult, her rapid changes of colour and unquiet glancings of the eye sufficiently attested; and, with generous sympathy, he immediately enlisted in her cause. Ignorant of the extent of her offences, though unfavourably inclined towards her, he attached himself to her side with the most respectful deference during the visit of the Waltons, and did not relax in his attentions for some time after their departure.

Anna thanked him with a look. Her feminine sensibilities were tolerably blunted by association with Dicky Edge and his libertine companions; but she had been wounded to the quick by the cool contempt of Mrs. Walton—Mrs. Walton, whom *she* had been accustomed to patronize as a dowdy country neighbour; and though Dick Egerton had inspired her with mistrust and dislike of his parson-cousin, Julius had now secured her gratitude by one of those spontaneous acts of kindness which remain indelibly impressed on a woman's mind. It was a relief to him when the period of his visit expired; but on quitting the green lawns of West Hill—a spot the very type of English comfort and elegance—he could not but reflect with pain upon the destinies of its owner; a man whose best days had been devoted to the discharge of public duties; and who now, installed in his age in the paradise destined to be the reward of his toils, was disgraced in the eyes of the world by the levity of an unworthy partner.

The close of so honourable a career as Vassyll's ought to have been one of philosophical enjoyment. His days ought to have elapsed at West Hill in calm and honourable seclusion. But the vicinity of Tiverton Castle had brought mildew upon his hopes. Julius was forced to admit that an intimacy with the Egerton family had proved the bane of an eminent and upright man.

"I was sadly afraid you would be tempted to refresh yourself another day or two with the quiet of West Hill, and the good sense of Mr. Vassyll," said Lady Henrietta, giving him her hand, with a smiling blush, as he entered the saloon. "We have missed you sadly here. My cousins have been twice as noisy, and the Harleys twice as stupid, as usual; or I have had leisure, for the first time, to notice their dulness. I rode over to Burthwaite yesterday," she resumed, after Julius had made the customary inquiries after her health. "You have never been civil enough to invite me to look at your house. But as I know papa has ordered off all the workmen this week (lest it should be finished too soon, and tempt you away from us), I took the opportunity of your absence to invade your dominions."

"And what discoveries did you make?" inquired Julius.

"None that surprised me. It was no more than I expected to find, that, though apparently engaged here in unprofitable pur-

suits, you are presiding actively all the while over the welfare of your parishioners. If any one had asked me formerly whether there were a village at Burthwaite, I should have said 'No!'—having ridden a hundred times along Burthdale, and past the tarn, without considering the few miners' hovels scattered here and there as deserving the name of human habitations. But *you* have taught me better things, I visited these people yesterday; and all you have done and are doing for them raises them to due importance in my eyes, and renders me ashamed of my previous indifference."

"Did you go alone?" demanded her cousin, his eyes glistening with delighted surprise at the frankness of her confessions; and, for the first time, detecting in the now animated countenance of Lady Henrietta a family resemblance to her cousin Mary.

"Mamma, you know, does not approve of our riding alone. No! my cousins and the whole party were with me. I proposed the excursion as a visit to the Burthwaite mine; and while the gentlemen were exploring it (to the utter consternation of poor Sir Edwin, whom Jane Flintham persuaded to allow her to bear him company in the exploit), I took the opportunity to make myself acquainted with your little domain."

"It was scarcely fair of you to visit Burthwaite during my absence!" said Julius, annoyed at the idea of the confusion likely to have been produced among his humble parishioners by such an inbreak of fine people. "You ought to have waited for me to do the honours of the place. There are a thousand lovely points of scenery I should like to have pointed out to you."

"The points I was most desirous to see, are precisely those you would have left undisplayed," said Henrietta. "I know you better now, Julius, than I did last week."

"I trust I improve upon acquaintance?" said her cousin, trying to check, with a commonplace jest, a conversation to which he rightly conjectured that John Flintham was maliciously listening.

"Not in the estimation of the rest of the party here," she replied, following the direction of his eyes, and catching his meaning. "*L'absent a toujours tort*, you know; and, during your stay at West Hill, you have got into disgrace with mamma and Ismena."

"Indeed!"

"I can scarcely tell you why; unless that they thought you were going to play them false and remain with the Vassylls, when you knew they were so anxious you should be here during the visit of the Dumbartons."

"Are they arrived?"

"They will be here at dinner to-day."

"And am I not on the spot to receive them? In my general habits, I assure you, I am punctual to a fault."

"A professional virtue," observed Mr. Flintham, glad of an opportunity to join in a conversation of which he saw himself a convicted eavesdropper. "I have always observed parsons and actors to be models of punctuality."

"You place me in honourable company, Sir," observed Julius, haughtily. "In one respect, however, you are entitled to class us together ; we are alike servants of the public."

John Flintham replied by one of his peculiar sneers ; and Julius Egerton's colour rose so vividly, that Lady Henrietta felt for once relieved by her mother's precipitate entrance into the room. Lady Tiverton was in one of her fussiest moods. Though usually distinguished by a certain elegant *nonchalance* of manner, she was too much excited by the idea, that a dukedom and a hundred thousand a-year were to sleep that night within her gates, which any error of management on her own part might send forth again a-begging, that all her manœuvres were brought into the field of action. Like a general on the eve of a battle, she kept inspecting her ground and visiting her outposts, lest any unlucky spot should be unprepared.

Julius could not help feeling that at that moment the fashionable Countess, the elegant Lady Tiverton, was reduced to the level of the Davises and Waltons ; for her charges to Lady Henrietta concerning her dress and deportment, and to himself concerning the etiquettes to be observed at the dinner-table, were worthy of the wife of some opulent cit, in all the agonies of a dinner from the Lord Mayor, or of aunt Rachel when doing the honours of Helstone Parsonage to Sir Thomas and Lady Smyth.

"I was afraid you might not be back in time to take Lord Tiverton's seat," said she, addressing Julius in a somewhat ungracious tone, after having despatched her daughter to dress ; "and I confess I should have been exceedingly annoyed had you prolonged your visit at West Hill. I can assure you that, long after the Dean of Darlington became a dignitary of the church, he never dreamed of absenting himself from the Castle, without previous inquiry, when any formal party took place. I trust, Mr. Egerton, I may rely upon you to be always in the way while the Duchess is our inmate ? She is a person of the old school, and would not be able to eat her dinner unless grace were said over it by a chaplain. I shall therefore feel myself obliged to you to devote a considerable portion of your time to her while she remains at the Castle."

"Certainly—so far as my professional duties will admit," said Julius, indignant at finding himself required to be "in the way," after the phrase usually addressed to footmen ; more especially as Mr. Flintham, though pretending to be absorbed in the "Times" newspaper, was evidently enjoying the scene. "But nearly the whole of to-morrow I must be at Burthwaite. It is not worth while to return to the Castle between the services."

"It is out of the question your being spared for Burthwaite to-morrow," interposed the Countess, haughtily. "I shall write to the Dean's curate, and desire him to go over and read prayers there in the afternoon, which is as much as the mining people have ever been used to."

"It is scarcely so much as they are entitled to," replied Julius, gravely; "and I quitted West Hill to-day for the express purpose of doing my duty to-morrow."

"As if a single Sunday could be of the least consequence!" said Lady Tiverton. "Three out of four among them consider it an act of oppression to be sent to church."

"An additional reason for my not allowing such unfavourable dispositions to gain ground," replied Egerton, firmly. "The zeal of my parishioners is not likely to be increased by finding their minister study the dictates of his convenience rather than those of his conscience."

"Depend upon it, they know better than to take the liberty of sitting in judgment upon the conduct of Lord Tiverton's nephew!" cried the Countess, growing impatient. "You forget that they are our tenants and dependants; and what right, pray, have they to complain if, for once, their landlord's nephew and nominee choose to comply with the wishes of the patron by whom his services to the parish are required?"

Julius Egerton blushed scarlet; partly at Lady Tiverton's want of delicacy, but still more at the idea that John Flintham should be enabled to convey at some future time to Georgiana Heseltine, the news that all her prophecies were come to pass, and that the drudge of Helstone was occupying a far more humiliating position in the household of his Right Honourable uncle the Earl of Tiverton.

"The weather is overcast," resumed her ladyship, fancying that the silence of Julius arose from submission; "and, should it rain to-morrow, the Duchess would consider it most extraordinary if, in such an establishment as ours, there were no chaplain at hand to perform the service at home. It would, in fact, be a most indecent oversight. Were the Dean at Wyndham, I should make it a point with him to show the Dumbartons the respect of being here to officiate for them, as, in fact, he makes it his duty to do whenever we have personages of note staying in the house. But the Dean will not be here till the end of next week."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Julius coldly, perceiving that she paused for a reply.

"Oh! I would almost as soon it should be yourself," answered the Countess. "It looks just as well, on the whole, to have the office performed by a member of the family—by a person of the name of Egerton; as, in fact, I mentioned to Lord Tiverton, when I was so urgent with him that you should take up your abode here instead of at Burthwaite."

Poor Julius ! The secret then was out ! He had been tolerated by Lady Tiverton, in order to impart a sufficient air of decency to her establishment, and satisfy the rigid exactions of a serious Duchess of Dumbarton ! He was there as a pretence at domestic piety—as a make-believe—a sheet of blotting-paper—a daub of varnish upon the dim morality of the Egerton family ! Had he not fortunately recalled to mind that the woman before him was the mother of Henrietta, he might have been tempted to phrase his reproof in terms far more bitter than those which had occasionally overawed even the tyranness of Helstone. As it was, he subdued his rising indignation, and hastened from the room, reserving it to the morrow to prove his independence in deeds rather than in words.

There was no fear, in the interim, of further irritations on the part of the Countess. He heard the train of Dumbarton carriages roll into the court-yard, and was satisfied that the last exhibition wherewith Lady Tiverton would choose to amuse her grace was a squabble with one of his cloth ; and made his appearance at dinner, intending to take his usual share in the amusements of the evening, without reference to what had passed.

Prepared by his experience of her hypocrisies, it was no surprise to him that Lady Tiverton should address him in a tone of the blandest amenity, when presenting him to the beardless Duke and bearded Dowager, as “ Lord Tiverton’s nephew, in holy orders, and a resident in their family.” But he did not suspect that she carried her pitiful dissimulation yet further, by ordering her daughters to exert themselves to the utmost with a view of conciliating their refractory cousin.

“ That blockhead, young Egerton, has chosen this unlucky moment to set himself up in opposition to my wishes !” she observed to Lady Henrietta, before they entered the saloon. “ It would be highly injudicious to have an *esclandre* with him just now, as it is most desirable the Duchess should see us all upon velvet ; which was the reason I pressed the Holwells to stay another week. Those serious people think so much of family union. Pray, therefore, my dear, see what you can do this evening to coax the black dog from Julius’s shoulder. I have often observed you very kind in noticing your cousin, of which he ought to be, and probably is, properly sensible. Talk him over, therefore, and, above all things, make him remain at the Castle to-morrow, to be in the way should prayers be wanted.”

Lady Henrietta had fortunately too much sense and feeling to comply with this injunction to the letter. She profited by her mother’s sanction to devote her whole evening to conversation with her cousin, without once alluding to the morrow’s duties ; but, as he was out of sorts with her mother, she felt at liberty to exercise her utmost blandishments to restore him to a happier frame of mind.

It was a very happy evening for Julius. The whole family, with the exception of Henrietta, were engaged in admiration of the Dumbartons. Not an eye was at liberty to wander from the august circle over which the solemn dowager presided, to the green nook of the conservatory, where, seated beside his fair and interesting cousin, without thought of the past, without care for the future, he gave himself up to the charm of unreserved conversation with the being dearest to him on earth.

The Duchess of Dumbarton was a pretentious, ignorant, heavy personage, preserved from vulgarity by being a woman of rank; and from insignificance as a woman of rank, by having thrown herself, as the French call it, into devotion. There is something in enthusiasm which imparts consequence even when the source of its exaggerations is contemptible; but her grace had contrived to enrol herself in support of a cause, the magnitude of which was indeed likely to secure her from being overlooked!

All sympathy with the Duchess as the dupe of Lady Tiverton vanished, however, from the mind of Julius, when he saw that amid her vast professions, her bushels of chaff, scarcely a grain of genuine piety was to be found. Great stumblings at straws, great straining at gnats, great controversies about petty doctrinal obscurities, formed the sum total of her grace's seriousness. A rigid aristocrat, she regarded a strict attention to religious observances as one of the high-bred endowments of her caste, rather than as the duty of a responsible being. "Church and King" was inscribed upon her banner—barely assigning precedence to the former, so thoroughly was what the world called holiness the result of politics and pride. With her grace, the church was a portion of the constitution rather than the type of the one faith; and, as a matter of course, she rated such a man as the Dean of Darlington far higher in her catalogue of worthies than the blameless drudge who laboured humbly through the multifarious duties of the living of Wyndham.

The Duchess of Dumbarton was, in short, a very weak woman, whose predilections had fortunately taken a turn, which not only kept her out of mischief, but secured a large proportion of her fine fortune from being wasted on the puerilities of fashion; ostentation leading her to devote considerable sums to public charities, instead of to opera-boxes and jewellers' shops.

But though so much below the standard of sanctity she fancied herself to have attained, there was nothing but what was highly respectable in the Duchess of Dumbarton. She did much good and little harm. Her example rendered many serious who would otherwise have clung exclusively to the levities of life. Her moral conduct had been through life so unexceptionable as to accredit her peculiar ways of thinking; and, with respect to her motives, they rested betwixt herself and her great accompt. It is, in fact, an invidious task to pry, on any pretext, into the motives of other

people. The visible result is all which ought to afford matter of judgment to our infirm intelligence.

As Lady Tiverton and her daughter anticipated, the Duchess had heard mention, amid the gossipings of her serious coterie, of the high promise of the St. John of Helstone; had been present on the occasion of his probationary preaching at St. James's; and though at variance with many of his doctrines (*i. e.*, though she had heard his doctrines confuted by a certain Dr. Macnab, the pope of her narrow faith), she rejoiced to learn that another young man of noble extraction was added to the illustrations of the pulpit. The Tivertons raised themselves in her estimation by the promptitude with which they had bestowed a living upon their promising kinsman; and she was delighted to find that the visit to Tiverton Castle, which was to make her acquainted with the family of her future daughter-in-law, would at the same time bring young Egerton, the famous preacher, under her scrutiny. The pains taken by the Dean of Darlington to stigmatize his young rival in all companies as "a saint," proved, in a great measure, the means of recommending him to the good opinion of her grace the Duchess of Dumbarton.

Lady Tiverton need not, however, have agitated herself concerning his Sabbath officiation. The Duchess wished to dispute with and catechise the young Melancthon; but she had far too much spiritual pride to intrust herself to the instruction of a weakling. Great ladies seldom travel without their own house linen, medicine chest, and even physician; but her grace added to her necessaries of locomotive life, an attendant chaplain. While other august travellers tremble at the idea of damp sheets, or, the fear of imbibing spurious drugs, her grace shuddered at the thoughts of lukewarm teachers or spurious doctrines; and no sooner did the verifications of Lady Tiverton's prognostics concerning the weather render it impossible to proceed to Wyndham Church for the celebration of divine service, except at the risk of rheumatism to the whole family, than the Duchess hastened to gather her offspring under her wings; and having clucked together the Harleys, the young Duke, and his quondam tutor, Dr. Macnab, sailed with dignity out of the room, that the elect party might proceed to the private enjoyment of their uncontaminated devotions.

Throughout the day, Pope Macnab and his conclave remained religiously secluded; and Lady Tiverton, who had looked forward with terror to this critical Sunday as the touchstone of her hopes, began to breathe more freely when she found her family judged unworthy of participation in the solemnities of the "serious." As midnight approached, and the Sabbath drew towards its close, she felt that Ismena's chances of becoming a duchess were increased at least fifty per cent. -

She trusted to her own assiduities to surround the Duchess

with delusions during the remainder of her visit. The Harleys were already won over: the good-natured Lady Elizabeth by the homage lavished upon her by her future sister-in-law; and Mr. Harley (who did not altogether share the opinions of the family), by the hope that, under the presidency of Lady Ismena, Dumbarton Palace would become a more tolerable residence than was likely to be the case with any other daughter-in-law selected by the solemn Duchess.

"All seems upon velvet!" was Lord Holwell's remark aside to Julius Egerton, after the ducal family had been installed eight-and-forty hours in the house. "Young Dumbarton, you see, is more in love than ever with Ismena; whom, to do her justice, I never saw look so handsome as she does just now. The absence of trinkets and fine clothes, and the hope of being a Duchess, have done more for her than all the beauty-washes in the world."

"Still I should scarcely have imagined my cousin likely to submit to the exactions of such a person as the Duchess of Dumbarton," replied young Egerton, gravely.

"Pho, pho! Ismy and my sister are clever enough to submit to the exactions of any human being whom it is their interest to please. If Lady Tiverton wanted to marry her daughter to the Emperor of China, Ismena would acquire a pair of tiny feet and triangular eyes in a fortnight! Besides, the Dowager, like all people otherwise in their own conceit, is liable to be humbugged as a child. She has been living so exclusively among the saints, as to be a thousand years behindhand with the sayings and doings of the wicked ones. Of such people as Adolphus Egerton and Dicky Edge, she knows nothing except through the peerage; and having been assured by Pope Macnab (who is aware that Egerton has the disposal of the Duke of Pelham's church preferment) that Lord Tiverton's eldest son was a very fitting associate for her hopeful cub, she allowed young Dumbarton to be taken to St. James's Square, where he allowed himself to be taken in."

"Nothing could be more natural than that he should fall in love with the first handsome, elegant girl with whom he was ever in company," observed Julius, with a sigh.

"I wish you had heard the Duchess holding forth to me this morning," cried Lord Holwell, "in praise of her exemplary prudence in the management of her son! How she has kept him out of the way of sin and temptation—the gaming-table and the turf—opera-dancers and fashionable young ladies! The object of her life, she says, has been to unite him at the earliest possible age with a woman of the most unblemished possible descent. High family and good character are all she insists upon;—good *character*, pray observe, my dear Ju, not good principles! It never seems to have occurred to her to look out for a daughter-in-law among her favourite saints; who, to do them justice, are seldom qualified to prove their thirty-two quarterings."

"It is only fitting that a person of the Duchess of Dumbarton's turn of thinking should incline towards a well-assorted alliance," observed young Egerton.

"Well assorted? Do you call a match well assorted that is suitable only according to an heraldic table of precedence?" cried Lord Holwell, in a rage. "Ismena Egerton may be a very proper wife for the Duke of Dumbarton in the estimation of Garter King-at-Arms; but you and I, my dear fellow, who are behind the curtain"—

"Ought to be debarred by that very circumstance from pronouncing so loudly our opinion on the matter," observed Egerton, with a smile.

"Ay, ay—I see how it is!" cried Lord Holwell. "You owe the Duchess a grudge for having admitted herself disappointed in the polemic powers of the Reverend Julius Egerton, of whose piety and talents such wonders had been bruited abroad by the penny trumpetings of Silas Vivian and his confederates; and so you don't care what becomes of her bearess-ship's cub!"

"I was not so much as aware that the Duchess had noted my existence," replied Julius, uncertain whether Lord Holwell were in jest or earnest. "*Her* share in the business concerns me very lightly; but I have too many obligations to my uncle and Lady Tiverton not to desire that their wishes may be accomplished by the happy establishment of their daughter."

"Ay, ay! and too deep an interest in the loaves and fishes attached to the prosperity of the house of Egerton, not to promote its alliance with one of the most affluent families of the kingdom!" retorted Lord Holwell. "Dumbarton's list of livings beats every body's but the Duke of Pelham's—which is the cause of the old lady having always had such a flock of black sheep following in her train; and at present, I suppose the young fellow can't be much shackled by engagements. However, I can promise you, friend Ju, that unless you disgrace yourself by a little cant, you'll never get on with the Dowager. So as the '*jeu*' may not after all '*valoir la chandelle*,' perhaps you had best make up your mind to stick to Burthwaite, and remain a gentleman."

Such coarse sarcasms as these, Julius did not, of course, consider worthy a reply; but they served to embarrass his manner in conversation with the Duchess, so as to draw down the animadversions of Lady Tiverton. "Julius was the only member of the family who would not condescend to put himself a little out of his way for the sake of advancing the object they had all so anxiously in view. Julius was almost ungracious to the dear Duchess—almost overbearing to the poor, unoffending Duke—almost arrogant to that excellent man, Dr. Macnab—almost impertinent to the Harleys!" There was no end to his offences; and, though her ladyship's instructions were issued every day more peremptorily to Lady Henrietta, to keep her favourite in order unless she in-

tended to see him receive sentence of dismissal from the favour of the Castle, very little improvement was perceptible, till Henrietta's appeal to his feelings was made in such terms as could be only conveyed in the tenderest of whispers, and enforced with looks of love, which he must have been more or less than man to disregard. "Be more gracious to them, dearest Julius, for my sake," said the siren; and Julius felt, as he listened, that for *her* sake he could have borne to be gracious even to her two insolent brothers.

The suspense of the family, meanwhile, was not fated to much prolongation. Before the close of the first week at Tiverton Castle, the Duchess of Dumbarton became thoroughly intoxicated with the incense of flattery every where burning around her. Like a vast balloon, she became gradually so inflated, that breaking through her safety cords, and ascending into the seventh heaven of the vain-glorious, the limbo of vanity, she lost sight of all worldly prudence. She requested, in short, an audience of the Earl and Countess, to tender the formal proposals of the Duke her son for the hand of their elder daughter; and Lady Ismena was as much startled, as much in need of sal-volatile and a cambric handkerchief, on learning how much she was honoured, as if for three months past she had not been moving heaven and earth to accomplish the match. She asked for time to make up her mind; pleading a thousand delicate distresses, in a tone of candour that would have done honour to the acting of *Mademoiselle Mars*, and could scarcely be entreated into smiling the reluctant consent, which the simple lad, whom her arts had infatuated, regarded as the crowning incident of his earthly prosperity and happiness.

All now was "upon velvet." The puppets had obeyed the impulsion of the wires agitated by the master-hand; and, after years of painstaking, Lady Ismena Egerton was an affianced Duchess!

From that auspicious moment, Lady Tiverton, at the summit of her joy, withdrew her attention from every thing and every mortal living, but her triumphant daughter. The dream of her life was accomplished—accomplished, too, at a moment when the defection of Lord Storby, and the unprosperous result of another season, had thrown her almost into despair. For, haughtily as she carried herself, not a smile or sneer that noted the unsuccessful efforts of the fading beauty, for some time past, had been lost upon her. She had long writhed under the contemptuous politeness of rival mammas, to whom, in the onset of her daughter's career, she had betrayed her presumptuous expectations, when they came in their turn to announce the marriages of their own less aspiring Marys and Sophias, who, unannounced by a flourish of trumpets, were making a victorious exit from the stage as *Marchioness of This*, or *Viscountess the Other*. Every new match, in short, proclaimed for two seasons past by the clarion of the *Morning Post*, had filled

her with shame ; and she not only detected the impertinence of those persons who really rejoiced in her mortification, but suspected a thousand sneers where none were intended.

Her ladyship's joy at the present crisis was consequently unbounded. She, who had begun to appreciate the advantages of even a moderately good match, and had been actually on the point of making up to a Northumberland baronet with a doubtful rent-roll of eight thousand a-year—she who had positively grudged the three last of the five Misses Flintham their pitiful alliances—nay, she who had invited Sir Edwin Skiff to the Castle to be in reserve as a *pis aller* in case the serious duchess should prove intractable, or the Harleys treacherous—she had drawn the great prize after all ! The best match in the kingdom—the most unencumbered estate—the premier duke—the only young man of his class against whom there was nothing to urge, inasmuch as he was a moral non-entity, and known to nobody ! Lady Tiverton had indeed cause to be proud of the success of her policy. But she forgot to glory in the means, so overpowering was her delight in the end accomplished. The same favour of fortune which had enhanced by previous difficulties her accession to Tiverton Castle, trebled her satisfaction in the promotion of her daughter by the dread she had undergone of finding her left upon her hands. All day she was writing notes and letters, communicating to friends and acquaintances, and even kinsfolk long unhonoured by her notice, the important fact, that she was about to become mother-in-law to the young Duke of Dumbarton.

Then there were pompous closetings with the Dowager—discussions of dower and pin-money—settlements and family diamonds—and, while pretending to defer in every instance to the judgment of her grace, it was astonishing how cleverly Lady Tiverton contrived to have her own way. From the changing of the family coachmaker to the re-setting of the family jewels, her taste regulated all ; for, as the Dowager made a profession of being above such puerile considerations, Lady Ismena and her mother had a fair pretext for taking upon themselves the arrangement of matters which the Duchess had secretly intended to sway at her pleasure. Still, their assumptions were so plausibly carried on, that not a word was to be said in opposition ; her grace, though virtually reduced to a cypher, being still treated with all the external reverence due to the mother of the Gracchi, or of the Duke of Dumbarton.

Such bales of letters as the London and other posts daily conveyed from Tiverton Castle to lawyers, bankers, milliners, mantua-makers, jewellers, shoemakers, hosiers, drapers, dukes, duchesses, nobles, and plebeians, remotely or proximately concerned in the alliance of Lady Ismena Egerton ! and such bales of letters, patterns, and invoices, as made their appearance in return ! The young Duke, an awkward, timid stripling, five years younger than his age (which for two months to come was within one-and-twenty),

seemed overawed by the pomp and circumstance called into action by so simple an incident as his first falling in love. An imperial coronation, or a declaration of war, would scarcely have occasioned more ferment than the preparation for his nuptials; and conscious how much he should prefer the readiest and most cursory mode of making the lovely Ismena his wife, it was a grievous trial to have to listen to Lady Tiverton's programmes of settlements, and projects for the management of Irish estates and borough-interest; and still more, to his mother's everlasting discourses upon the suitability of the alliance, and the fact, that were it even *better* assorted in point of birth, any stigma upon the moral character of the family with which the house of Dumbarton was about to connect itself, would have determined her as his sole guardian, and the most exemplary mother of modern times, to refuse her consent.

"By the wise providence of your father, who had unbounded confidence, I am proud to say, in my prudence," was her grace's daily text, "you do not come into the enjoyment of your estates, my dear Dumbarton, till five-and-twenty years of age, unless in the event of my voluntary abdication of office as your guardian; the late lamented Duke feeling it impossible to surmise what would be the future capacities and dispositions of his infant son: and believe me, my dear boy, that notwithstanding your rare discretion, and the perfect propriety with which you have got through the sad ordeals of college life, nothing would have induced me to resign thus prematurely the prerogatives of my important office, had you not decided upon allying yourself with a family so honourable as that of the Egertons—a family which so long ago as the third year of Henry VII. intermarried with the house of Dumbarton, by the union of Thomas Willymys Lord Egerton with the Lady Margaret Frisel, daughter of the then Earl of Dumbarton; a family which, even in these degenerate times, remains undigressed by the derogations which have connected the peerage with the commercial world—nay, even with the infamy of the stage; a family which has never figured before the tribunals of the country, as we see hourly the case with the profligate scions of the new aristocracy; a family of which all the sons are virtuous, and all the daughters—that is, of which all the sons are brave, and all the daughters virtuous."

Lady Tiverton, when she had the misfortune to be present at these long-winded harangues, sometimes neglected to acknowledge with due obeisances at proper intervals the compliments they purported to convey, so absorbed was she in reflecting upon the hazards revealed by the introductory clause; and the more she contemplated the vexations it might have caused her had the Duchess taken it into her head to disapprove the connection, the more she congratulated herself upon the auspicious fruition of her scheme. Even now—even with the settlements and jewels in progress, and the heralds' office busy with the armorial bearings

of the family coach—she felt that she could not too anxiously surround the Duchess with precautions and devotion.

Such were the coincidences which now, for several ensuing weeks, left Julius Egerton to the undisturbed enjoyment of his charming cousin's infatuating society. In the flurry of the hour, Lady Henrietta was totally overlooked by her mother. Lady Tiverton, seemed to care for nothing under a Duchess. The feeble, slight, diminutive Henrietta, who, by the side of her resplendent sister was as the pale moonlight compared with the meridian sun, was so easily thrown into the shade, that she was not even sufficiently remembered in the family for the Countess to feel grateful to Julius for taking into his hands the care of her happiness and entertainment. Lady Henrietta was never in the way of the lovers, or of the Duchess, who looked down upon her as a child ; and this was all that signified for the present to her managing mother.

There had been some difficulty, indeed, in clearing the Castle of the supernumeraries, who, from the moment the proposal was actually made and accepted, proved sadly *de trop*; and a less skilful manœuvrer than Lady Tiverton might have found it impracticable to dismiss her guests without giving offence. For she had detained her brother's family against Lord Holwell's will, in order to form an interesting group in the domestic picture ; and Sir Edwin Skiff, in defiance of his inclination to be off to Doncaster, as a second string to her bow in case of the ducal one relaxing ; and it was not so easy to make it evident that, now all was safe, she was afraid their high spirits and thoughtless activity might be too much for a person of such quiet habits as the Duchess of Dumbarton. Jane Flintham, who had set her heart upon prolonging her visit to secure Sir Edwin (who, nautically speaking, wished for nothing better than to anchor in the same moorings with a young lady so yachtishly inclined), thought it a hard case that their invitation was not renewed, to enable her to officiate as bridesmaid at the nuptials of the duchess-elect.

"I see how it is!" cried Lord Holwell, when Lady Tiverton was beating about the bush to make him understand the eligibility of their proceeding towards the north before the season was too far advanced. "After bothering us to remain, as safe spectators who would neither interfere with your game, nor blab, should your plans break down, you want to get rid of us without feeling a moment's inclination to do a good turn to one of my girls now that your own daughter has hooked her gudgeon. Well!—'tis the way of the world! Only be warned by me, my jewel, lest in landing this mighty fish, you precipitate yourself head over ears into the water! It is provoking enough to be overreached by other people ; but you'd find it the unkindest cut of all to be overreached by yourself!"

Lady Tiverton's nature was too ossified in self-possession to be

easily disconcerted even by the tomahawking of her brother. Laughing off his attack as "a specimen of dear Holwell's odd Irish ways, at which it would be absurd to take offence," she agreed with Lady Ismena that, provided the Flinthams took themselves off, it mattered little whether they went in good humour or ill; and, at length, by civil or uncivil means, the whole party was disposed of, and none but the bridegroom and his family remained with the bride and hers.

It might be doubted, however, whether this clearing out were altogether a proof of Lady Tiverton's usual tact. In a group of considerable extent, people of discordant natures and opinions are brought to harmonize more readily than when opposed to each other in single relief. When isolated into consequence, like trees detached by the thinning out of a wood, the oak is more distinguishable from the elm, and the elm from the beech, than when all are massed together by intermediate verdure. Accordingly, when the Duchess had no longer the plaintive murmurs of Lady Holwell, and the unmeaning gabble of the Misses Flintham interposed between herself and Julius Egerton (the only individual interesting to her in the minor groups at Tiverton Castle, because the only one habited in a suit of sable), she began to discover that he was much too frivolous in his pursuits for a man of his cloth; that whereas a chaplain is only entitled to divide his reading between the ponderous folio of obsolete divinity and the pamphlet manifestos of Hatchard's, the rector of Burthwaite was often to be seen with scandalous tomes of octavo form and gilt binding in his hand, savouring of such enervate theology as that of Blair or Porteus—nay, worse, of profane poetry—profane dramas;—the obscenity of Shakspeare—the trivialty of Scott—the infamy of Byron!

From the moment this conclusion was suggested to her grace by Dr. Macnab, the Duchess ceased to regard poor Julius as any thing better than a heretic; and she pursed up her mouth after saluting him with the brief civilities of the day, as if resolved to communicate no further with one so worthless. She had expected as much. Instead of taking up the glove of controversy, which she threw down to him soon after her arrival at the Castle, by hazarding in the most arrogant tone the most unorthodox opinions, Julius invariably rose and quitted the room in silence, whenever her grace's harsh denunciations, or Macnab's courtly whisperings of more mildly-announced but not less insolent infallibility, gave intimation to the circle that religion was about to be introduced as a topic of familiar discussion, in order that the serious Duchess and her pope might lay down THEIR law instead of that of the twelve tables, and the gospel; and the new Deborah and Barak consequently despised him for a weakling.

But now that the Tiverton family was becoming a part of her own, the Duchess was beginning to fancy that she should be ac-

countable to the world—*her* little world—for the contumacy or spiritual ignorance of any individual in a black coat bearing the name of Egerton ; and that she must either convert him or procure his ostracism. While the Countess was busy with her purveyors of wedding finery, the Earl with his solicitors, and the lovers with each other, her grace and her grace's high priest accordingly set about browbeating the well-bred, unassuming young chaplain, with all the strength of personal importance suitable to a rotund, well-dowered Duchess, the rich skirts of whose clothing swept the ground like the gorgeous curtains of the inner tabernacle.

The modest scholar felt that disputation with two persons who looked upon themselves as inspired—elect—above the reach of worldly wisdom—would be loss of time ; and preferred to endure in patience the spiritual crowings which he saw were intended as a declaration of war, not as an invitation to argument.

Nevertheless, when they chose to assume as acquiescence his philosophical composure, it was impossible not to burst forth once or twice into indignant dissent—dissent so unpalatable to her grace (who was accustomed to be followed in her own sanctum by a chorus of priests, harmonious as that of the Zauberpöte), that, like the swan which, after sailing majestically on the waves, an emblem of tranquillity and gentleness, comes hissing out of the water with flashing eyes and ruffled plumes, and by a stroke of its beak breaks the leg of the unhappy boy who has provoked its anger—she flew at the spiritual offender with a degree of unchristianly virulence known only among Christian controversarians.

It was then that Henrietta, like a spirit of peace, breathed into his ear the most persuasive entreaties to forbearance ; or, with her small white hand pressed affectionately upon her cousin's arm, commanded him to be silent and submit.

For what man of sensibility would not have felt his wrath subdued by an influx of balm so consolatory as that poured by the lovely Henrietta upon his wounded spirit ? What eye of five-and-twenty would not have been deceived into finding the voluminous Duchess altogether eclipsed by the aerial sylph that dexterously interposed betwixt the disputants ?

CHAPTER IX.

SCANDALS AND CONFIDENCES.

THE jocose Lord Holwell, when he took leave of Julius Egerton, in quitting Tiverton Castle, screwed his face into the assumption of as significant a look as a countenance so insignificant could be made to bear, by way of implying that he saw how matters were going on. But he was too indignant against the reckless selfish-

ness of his sister to hazard a word of warning to the Countess ; and too partial to Julius Egerton to apprehend any evil result from the evident attachment of his niece.

Others of his family, however, were less lenient in their interpretation. Jane Flintham and her sister were piqued beyond measure at finding the whole attention of the handsome chaplain pre-engaged, so that it was impossible to turn him to account in raising, by a fit of jealousy, the tepid passion of Sir Edwin Skiff ; while their brother, with all the vindictiveness of a narrow mind, saw with triumphant malice that the favoured friend of Miss Georgiana Heseltine was losing ground in general estimation, as well as forfeiting his own tranquillity of mind.

Like other dull people, John Flintham had, unluckily, a prodigious propensity for correspondence. His letters were among the million of unauthorized semaphores which transmit petty intelligence about nothing, from somebody to somebody, among nobodies ; and in the course of his epistolary labours, he took care to acquaint his friends at Mitford Hall with the domestic humiliations heaped upon Julius Egerton at Tiverton Castle. He was certain that Philip would read aloud to his sisters intelligence tending to depreciate a person whose proud reserve in a subordinate position, had rendered him obnoxious to them all ; and that the Misses Mitford (who were much addicted to the fine-lady vulgarism of repeating what they called *on dits*, and their waiting-maids called tittle-tattle) would in time convey the scandal to the spot where he wished it to take effect—the spot inhabited by the inexorable heiress of Eastwick and its dependencies.

Mischief has as many legs as a centipede. The substance of John Flintham's letter reached Eastwick within a week of its transmission into Kent. Clara and Emma Mitford owed a double grudge to the Egertons : to Mary, for having fascinated Lord Storby ; to Julius, for having fascinated Georgiana Heseltine ; each of whom had, at one period or other, been self-appropriated by the Mitfords of Mitford ; and they were accordingly rejoiced that a few days' stay at Tunbridge Wells enabled them, to drive over to the Lodge, and communicate their evil report.

"How are your friends at Hurley House ?" was a very natural turn of the conversation. "How did Miss Egerton bear Lord Storby's departure for the Continent ?"

"I seldom molest young ladies by leading questions regarding their love affairs," replied Georgiana. "I should never have heard a syllable of Lord Storby's proposals or refusal, had you not been kind enough to enlighten me concerning an attachment of which the hero appears to have made a generous boast to all his acquaintance. From first to last, Mary has hazarded no allusion to the subject in my presence. Kind-hearted, however, as she is, I make no doubt she is right glad that Lord Storby should have

set off on his travels ; as there is nothing like a foreign tour for wearing out a set of chariot-wheels, or an eternal passion."

"The Egerton family ought really to take out a patent for inspiring *les grandes passions!*" observed Clara Mitford, carelessly. "From their little obscure retreat, they send forth arrows in all directions, with the most fatal effect. That young man who was curate somewhere in this neighbourhood, (Julian—Julius—what was his name ?) rather a well-looking person, if you remember, but dull and silent, like a young gentleman who is making a reputation for understanding"—

"You mean Mr. Egerton's younger son, who was curate of Helstone, and enjoyed a considerable reputation as a preacher," interrupted Georgiana Heseltine, out of patience.

"Exactly ! He gave up his curacy, I fancy, a few months ago, to become domestic chaplain to Lord Tiverton ?"

"To take possession of a living to which he was presented by his uncle," amended Miss Heseltine.

"Well, he *has* taken possession of it, as might have been expected, by insinuating himself into the domestic circle at Tiverton Castle. He was always, you know, a great votary of great people. At college, he pitched upon a viscount as his bosom friend."

"That is, he enjoyed, in common with your brother, the society of Lord Storby, and others of his class. True ! But, as the grandson of a peer of the realm, I see nothing very much out of place in the association," persisted Miss Heseltine.

"Certainly not ; only we must remember that Mr. Julius Egerton had been brought up as the grandson of a village-schoolmaster, rather than as the grandson of an earl. While the inmate and dependent of Dr. Spry, we all saw how he sulked with his fortunes. He scarcely ever made his appearance in his father's homely circle at Hurley House ;—never appeared at the little parties of the neighbourhood, with that bore of an aunt of his—that vulgar old Miss Rebecca, who always calls you 'my dear,' or Miss Georgy."

"You mean Miss Rachel—a person who has been in habits of intimacy here for the last ten years," replied the uncompromising Georgiana.

"Rachel ?—Yes !—I rather think that *was* the woman's name !—Well ! ugly as it is, and disagreeable as people find its proprietress, I rather think young Egerton would have done as well to remain curate to his grandfather, the schoolmaster ; for Lord and Lady Tiverton will certainly turn him out of doors the moment they become aware that he is clandestinely engaged to his cousin, Lady Henrietta."

"*Is* he engaged to Lady Henrietta Egerton ?" said poor Georgiana, trying hard to speak in her usual tone of voice, and only able to preserve some degree of self-possession, because aware that the Misses Mitford, like other young ladies of their class, were bold

assertors on the slenderest foundations. "He has lost no time! It is scarcely three months since he left Helstone."

"He went, saw, and conquered, it appears," retorted Clara Mitford. "As I said before, these Egertons seem to have a genius for conquest. In the present instance, I am afraid his conduct is not altogether free from blame. While persuading the family that he was wedded to his duties, he contrived secretly to inveigle the affections of a young creature of seventeen, who has literally seen nothing of the world—literally never been out in London!"

"By all accounts, one of Lady Tiverton's daughters, on first emerging from her cradle, might be a match for a simple-hearted person like Julius Egerton," observed Miss Heseltine, resolutely.

"You have taken your cue respecting the Tivertons, I see, from the ill-natured comments of Lord Storby."

"No; from the praises lavished on the precocious cleverness of the family by your brother Philip."

"Of Lady Henrietta, however, Philip knew little or nothing. She is not even out—not even presented. We ourselves have never seen her except by an occasional glimpse at the back of Lady Tiverton's carriage, airing in the Regent's Park, or the King's Road, or other out-of-the-way places. She is so fair and delicate, moreover, that she looks even younger than she is."

"Well, for Mr. Egerton's sake, we will hope that her nature is as fair and delicate as her face," said Georgiana, barely escaping a sigh.

"Why, what can it signify? Nothing good, you know, can ever arise from the attachment. Do you imagine Lord Tiverton would throw away his daughter upon an indigent parson-nephew?"

"Lord Tiverton more than any other man, I should think—since he has such fine patronage in the church, in addition to his parliamentary interest."

"Ah, my dear Georgiana, a season in town would teach you to judge very differently of such matters!" cried Clara Mitford. "I may be pardoned for holding a daughter of Lord Tiverton's far more cheap than a young man like Julius Egerton, whose endowments entitle him to rise to the highest clerical distinctions, and whose moral qualifications are likely to do those distinctions honour."

"*Moral* qualifications!" reiterated Clara and Emma Mitford at the same moment, tossing their heads so as to display to great advantage their own self-sufficiency, and the curl of the feathers in their showy bonnets.

"Mr. Egerton's sense of morality has not hitherto displayed itself so as to command much respect among his new associates," added Emma, spitefully. "I can assure you that his conduct at Tiverton Castle"—

"You speak as if you had just arrived from them!" interrupted

Georgiana. "I fancied you had been passing the autumn at Mitford Hall?"

"And so we have. But Philip had a letter yesterday from Mr. Flintham, communicating all sorts of news about the Tivertons. In the first place, their eldest daughter is about to be married to the Duke of Dumbarton."

"He might have spared himself that trouble," observed Georgiana. "Lady Tiverton wrote a week ago to claim the congratulations of the Hurley family; and every day since, the newspapers have been favouring us with daily particulars of the preparations for nuptials so illustrious."

"The newspapers failed, however, to add, that while the Tivertons were engaged with these preparations, their nephew seized the golden opportunity to betrothe himself to their youngest daughter."

"If *that* be poor Julius Egerton's gross breach of morality"——cried Georgiana, with a smile.

"You are so over-eager in defence of your friend, that you will not suffer me to conclude!" interrupted Emma Mitford, in her turn. "Mr. Flintham went on to say, that the various connections of the family were shocked to perceive how thoroughly the St. John of Helstone had laid aside his pretence to superior sanctity, on attaining the situation his hypocrisy had enabled him to achieve."

"I never should have conceived a pretence to saintship likely to have recommended him to the chaplaincy of Tiverton Castle!" again ruthlessly interrupted Georgiana.

"The moment he arrived there, the mask was thrown off," resumed Miss Mitford. "He became not only like the rest of the world, but gayer than the gayest of the gay world—firting, dancing, and playing the fool with such girls as the Flinthams."

"By way of inveigling the affections of Lady Henrietta Egerton?"

"By way of compensation for the dull years wasted in a Kentish curacy."

"Poor fellow! He must be easily amused, to be content with such compensation," observed Miss Heseltine. "I should think it more likely he threw off his habitual reserve, hoping not to be too heavy an encumbrance upon his uncle's society."

"They have certainly found him sufficiently accommodating in such particulars. No man can be less of a *gâte-fête* than the *présent* Mr. Julius Egerton! He is, in fact, the *âme damnée* of his future mother-in-law. Lady Tiverton sends him trotting about after her lap-dog, and only allows him to do his duty when he has nothing better in hand."

"His duty as what? As *âme damnée* to a Countess?" demanded Georgiana.

"His duty as rector of a parish—a function with which I am not

surprised at your forgetting to invest him, since he seems to have forgotten it himself," retorted the elder of the Mitfords. "Ay, even to the point of making himself the apologist of Dicky Edge's vices, and the *cavaliere servente* of the foolish woman who, you know, is disgracing herself for his sake."

"I know nothing about either Dicky Edge or his affairs," replied Miss Heseltine, haughtily, "except that he was introduced to my father by yours, and made himself very disagreeable during his stay at Eastwick."

"But you must have seen in the Sunday newspapers, my dear Georgiana, allusions to his intimacy with a certain Mrs. Vassyll?"

"I never see a Sunday paper, unless when staying at Mitford Hall; except the Spectator, which deals with the affairs of the nation, not with those of Crockford's and the Crockfordites."

"At all events, the rumours of society must have acquainted you that"——

"Pardon me! the rumours of *our* humble circle regard such commonplace matters as the state of the hop-market—the discovery of a new planet—or Smith the veterinary surgeon's prescriptions for Mr. Egerton's favourite Alderney! We do not aspire to the discussion of fashionable intrigues."

"I see you are determined to *brusquer* all discussion of the matter!" cried Emma Mitford, rising angrily to take leave. "But though *you* may choose to close your ears, all the rest of the world is aware that Julius Egerton is lending himself in the most disgraceful manner to the dirty work of Tiverton Castle; that he submits to be ordered about by Lady Tiverton, as one of the upper servants; that when his cousin's *friend*, Mrs. Vassyll, was staying at the Castle (where all the respectable visitors made it a point of turning their backs upon her), *he* was employed by the family to beaun her about: and was so well pleased with the office, that he has *since* been paying his devoirs to her in her own house, in order to take his part in the family discredit of upholding a disreputable woman in the eyes of the county, lest she should be thrown upon the hands of Lord Tiverton's younger son!"

"By your account, poor Julius would really have done better to remain the drudge of his grandfather the schoolmaster!" said Georgiana, extending her hand in parting-greeting to her agreeable guests. "I am, of course, greatly obliged to you for your attention in bringing me news so gratifying to every friend of the family at Hurley House. Good bye. My best compliments to Mrs. Mitford."

So long as they remained, poor Georgiana contrived to put a tolerably composed face upon the matter. But the moment they were gone, her utmost pride did not enable her to restrain her tears. And this was to be the end of it all! This was to be the end of him whose genius, whose generosity of mind, whose ennobling and endearing qualities, had rendered him insensible to the

assiduities of the great, the courtships of the opulent ! With all due allowance for the Misses Mitfords' incontinence of tongue, she was afraid there was sufficient foundation for their reports to justify her bitterly bewailing the fall of Julius Egerton.

She was careful not to whisper a word upon the subject to her friend Mary, whom she justly conjectured to be contending with troubles of her own ; and forbore the smallest hint of impending evil when, morning after morning, poor William Egerton came to gossip over the happy prospects of his son, and the brilliant ones of his niece, the future Duchess of Dumbarton.

Georgiana was perfectly justified, meanwhile, in according only a limited faith to the rumours of Mitford Hall. Their announcements were only remotely founded on fact. So far was Julius Egerton from being clandestinely engaged to his cousin, that he had never ventured to breathe to Lady Henrietta an avowal of the attachment he had long ceased to conceal from himself. The gentle girl was sanctified in his sight as a sacred deposit confided to him by her parents ; and, unless with their full consent, he would have shrunk from entangling her in engagements unacceptable to her family. He even flattered himself that the state of his feelings was as imperceptible to others as to Lord and Lady Tiverton ; and so little apprehended the possibility of such a rumour transpiring as was now placed in circulation by the officiousness of Mr. Flintham, as to believe his rash passion a profound secret, even from its object. He almost hoped, however, that, unknown to herself, Henrietta was imbibing sentiments towards him worthy the devotedness of his affection. But he was careful not to withdraw the veil from her innocent heart by uttering a syllable likely to alarm her timid nature. At present, she gave herself up unreservedly to his society as to that of a favourite cousin ; and there could be no harm in enjoying the familiar companionship sanctioned by her family, so long as he abstained from pretending to a nearer connection.

For things to reman between them in this uncertainty was, he knew, impossible. Some casual circumstance must render their attachment manifest to themselves and others ; and Julius was determined to enter into a full explanation with Lord Tiverton, and either obtain his consent to an engagement which future preferment might crown with a happy but unostentatious union ; or, on his refusal, retire to Burthwaite, leaving his cousin to a more ambitious career. But the present moment was of all others unpropitious to an *éclaircissement*. The whole Castle was wild with vanity and pomp. Dukes ruled the hour. Lady Tiverton seemed to consider even an Earl an inferior being in the scale of creation ; and could think of nothing but strawberry-leaves.

This state of feverish excitement was, however, soon to end ; and to such infatuations a reaction of disgust is pretty sure to succeed. Julius was in hopes that after the marriage and de-

parture of the Duke and Duchess, and the relaxation of Lady Ismena's evil influence in the household, a moment would come when the happiness of their remaining daughter might weigh in the minds of the Earl and Countess against all the coronets of the peerage. There could be no doubt that family benefices and government preferment were sufficiently at Lord Tiverton's disposal to enable him to place his nephew in a position to match with Lady Henrietta Egerton.

Without reference to these contingencies, Lord Holwell had remarked to Julius on the eve of his departure, "Have a care of the old Duchess, Ju, my boy!—Take care that the Dowager don't put Tiverton out of conceit of you by crying you down as unorthodox, or some trash of that kind; for your uncle the old duke is on his last legs—(apothecaried to death, I fancy)—and Egerton will certainly succeed to his unentailed estates."

"And how is all this connected, may I ask, with the Duchess of Dumbarton's opinion of my orthodoxy?"

"Pho, pho!—*you* see through the thing well enough! When the Egerton influence is reinforced by two more votes, Egerton will, of course, secure a bishopric for Nicewig. The Dean, I know, counts upon it."

"And what then?"

"What then? Why, Wyndham will be at Tiverton's disposal; and as he knows very well that the living was intended by the late Earl for one of your father's sons (William Egerton told me so himself at Tunbridge eight years ago), there will be no pretence for not offering it to you, unless you should have given offence in the interim."

Wilful offence, Julius was certain he should not give; for insensibly he was beginning to regard the Earl and Countess rather as the parents of Henrietta, than as the uncle and aunt who had dealt so injuriously with his own. But Lord Holwell's warning drew out a thousand perplexing considerations; and though he resolved, in the event of the dean's promotion, to enter into the fullest explanations with Lord Tiverton previous to accepting the family living, he was not the less uneasy at finding his happiness at the mercy of such a person as the Duchess-Dowager of Dumbarton—a woman of whose understanding he had the meanest opinion, and whose prejudices were only the more dangerous because sanctified by her personal respectability.

His anxiety, however, whether well or ill-founded, vanished like snow in the sunshine, the moment he found himself in the company of Henrietta. Every day—every hour—increased her attractions in his eyes. Accustomed to the abrupt opinionativeness of Georgiana Heseltine, there was something in the helpless submissiveness of his cousin which touched him to the soul. Since she had become so much his companion, Henrietta had gradually directed her mind to studies of a more improving nature

He had persuaded her to read—had inspired her not only with a taste for poetry and literature, but even shamed her into the acquirement of knowledge. From these studies, at first irksome, she turned for relief to his society—now questioning for information—now arguing with him upon information already acquired.

"When I think how heavily my moments used to pass before you came here," she would say, as they sauntered together on horseback through the green glades of the park, or, from the lofty terrace of the glacis, watched the declining sun shed its reflections of purple and gold upon the distant Cumbrian mountains, "I wonder how I could ever overlook the resources of amusement you have opened to me! I am never tired of myself now—never *ennuyée* or out of spirits. Deeply indeed, my dearest cousin, will my future life be indebted to the exertions into which you have stimulated me. I am likely to live very much alone. Music and drawing tire one after a time, and needlework is a wretched companion for solitary hours. But books!—now you have taught me to love books, I am beginning to think that all times and places may be endurable!"

Julius did not think it necessary to gainsay Lady Henrietta's assertion, that she was likely to live very much alone; for the future life he trusted they were to pass together, would only be the more embellished by his lovely wife's having acquired a taste for occupation. He drew her arm, however, more closely within his, as these expressions of gratitude escaped her lips; and in low and loverlike accents thanked her for bearing so patiently with his advice, assuring her that many a tedious hour of his own less auspicious years had been beguiled by the influence of the pursuits in which he was labouring to interest her mind.

"But *you* can never have been dull—never unhappy!"—Henrietta would reply. "*You* belong to a large, happy, cheerful, united family. *You* have always been loved and favoured;—never been prevented from indulging your tastes, or made an object of derision when you happened to differ in opinion from the rest!"

Conscious that Lady Henrietta must refer to her own subordinate position in her family, which, while her beautiful sister was surrounded with adoration, left her a slave or a butt, Julius made no reply likely to promote mortifying reflections. He contented himself with representing that there were sufferings still harder to bear than those arising from personal neglect; and with bitter eloquence, described the pangs of poverty—the humiliation of dependence.

"You, my dear cousin, have never witnessed these miseries!" said he, with an involuntary pressure of her arm.

"It is true, I know nothing of *want*," replied Henrietta. "I have never seen those around me deny themselves the indulgence of even their caprices. But I am acquainted with a mortification

far more cruel than those you so feelingly describe ; I have seen those whose peace of mind is dear to me, suffering under the irritation of claims they were unable to satisfy. I have seen them pay a heavier price than money for the luxuries with which you see me surrounded. I have seen them exposed to just demands, and equally just reproaches, at their non-fulfilment. No, no ! Do not think me ignorant of the value of money—do not suppose me indifferent to the gifts of fortune ! I know how to value them, perhaps, even better than yourself !”

“ With such opinions, you must rejoice, my dear Henrietta,” said he, “ at the nature of your sister’s prospects ? You must consider Lady Ismena as a singularly fortunate person !”

“ I do indeed ; for nothing but such a position as she is about to attain would have secured her happiness. Ismy is born to shine in the world—formed to adorn society ; a very different person from my inert, indifferent self ! If I appear less elated than I ought by her happy prospects, it is because I cannot help feeling that so insignificant a person as the Duke of Dumbarton would not command *my* respect sufficiently to ensure my affection ; and because there is something in his mother which overawes me—something intolerant—something unsparing. I am convinced that, where the Duchess’s prejudices are concerned, no sacrifice of human comfort or happiness would deter her from her purposes.”

“ A fearful character, I admit !” exclaimed Julius. “ But Lady Ismena does not want for courage, and is capable of defending her own cause.”

“ I am not in my sister’s secrets,” observed Henrietta, following up the train of her own reflections. “ I was too young at the time of that unfortunate Howard affair, to be allowed to hear much about the matter. But Jane Flintham assured me the other day (at the time she was angry and jealous about Sir Edwin), that Ismy was once much attached to Mr. Howard, and gave him the greatest encouragement, which I can scarcely believe, as she has shown so little sympathy in his unfortunate condition. But though regard for *him* was not likely to prevent her acceptance of Dumbarton, I own that, when I think of your agreeable, clever, lively friend, Lord Storby, I am surprised to find her give the preference to a man without conversation, without intelligence, without an opinion of his own.”

“ The Duke is good-natured, and very much in love,” observed Julius, in an apologetic tone.

“ Still, she *must* have preferred Storby—who has every merit on earth to recommend him, except being a Duke. No wonder mamma was so pleased with her acceptance of Dumbarton ; for it was to gratify *her* wishes my sister sacrificed her inclinations in refusing Lord Storby.”

“ But *did* Lady Ismena refuse Lord Storby ?” inquired Julius, not a little astonished.

"Did you not hear mamma say so to the Duchess the other morning? Ismena has shown in every instance the most dutiful deference to mamma's opinion. I never in my life heard her oppose any project suggested by mamma!"

Julius did not seek to lessen Henrietta's filial or sisterly affection, by hinting that the tastes of Lady Tiverton and her daughter were unexceptionably accordant—alike worldly—alike interested. But he trembled when he saw her pin her faith so implicitly upon the assertions of one whose words he knew to be as devoid of truth, as her conduct of principle.

"At all events," resumed Lady Henrietta, never weary of pouring out her mind to her indulgent companion, "whatever may have been Ismy's hesitation in accepting the Duke of Dumbarton, I am convinced that her whole soul is now in the match. I would not for worlds have any thing occur to prevent it. Since all has been settled, she has been a different creature—so kind—so affectionate—so cheerful. Though her leaving Tiverton will compel me to give up to mamma a great deal of the time I am now able to occupy according to my own inclinations, I should deeply grieve were unforeseen obstacles to delay the marriage."

"Nothing is likely to delay it. The draught of the deeds came down last night," said Julius. "I have been all the morning in the library with my uncle, reading them over. He is quite satisfied—Lady Ismena is satisfied—all the world is satisfied; and, before Christmas, the great event will take place."

Julius almost trembled when he recalled to mind that it was to be the signal for that explanation with the Earl, which must decide his future destinies; and perhaps wither the fair promise which a moment's sunshine had called into unauthorized existence.

In asserting, meanwhile, that "every one was satisfied" with the progress of affairs between young Dumbarton and his future duchess, Mr. Egerton was premature. Her grace's pope, Dr. Macnab, was far from satisfied; and there was consequently every reason to apprehend that dissatisfactions might arise on the part of her grace. Lord Holwell's incautiousness, or rather his coarse disregard of the feelings of others, had caused him to hazard to the Duke's ex-tutor, the same observation he had made as if in friendly confidence to Julius; namely, that the Dean of Darlington reckoned upon the union of the Egerton and Frisel interest to secure him a bishopric—whereupon Lord Tiverton's nephew would progress to the family living of Wyndham, with such accumulations as were tenable; and the reverend Doctor, who disliked young Egerton for a certain insolent independence of mind and doctrines which he was little in the habit of encountering in the unbeneficed hangers-on of the Dumbarton clerical coterie, and who felt himself privileged by his zealous devotion to the education of the young Duke, to monopolize and direct to the end of his

days his grace's patronage in the church, was naturally indignant at finding himself surreptitiously superseded.

Self-interest, like hunger, is an impatient logician. Dr. Macnab forgot, in the irritation of the moment, that Lord Holwell's assertions were always hazardous, and might in the present instance be wholly devoid of foundation; and, on the strength of the wide talking of a good-humoured chatterbox, set about detesting and despising the whole population of Tiverton Castle, in a manner scarcely becoming his tiara, as pope of the faithful of Dumbarton Palace.

He now began to see clearly a thousand things which had previously escaped his observation;—to detect the worldliness of the Earl and Countess, and the frivolity of the bride-elect. He was at the trouble of ambling over to Burthwaite (one Sunday afternoon, when the Duchess was persuaded to accompany the family to their parish church at Wyndham) to take notes of the heretical opinions emitted by the young rector; and the profound attention bestowed upon his simple discourse by the half-savage congregation, whose respect and veneration were won over to the pulpit by the open-handed charities of Julius, served only to stimulate his rancour;—polemical excitement heaping coals upon the fire of his indignation against every thing bearing the name of Egerton.

Lady Ismena's strawberry-leaves would, in fact, have been in considerable jeopardy, had not the influence exercised in all other matters by the reverend Doctor over the mind of his noble proselyte, been met by a contrary ascendancy. The Duchess of Dumbarton doated on her son with a love such as the mothers of only sons can alone appreciate; and, inclining to favour all his predilections, she was growing really partial to the beautiful girl with whom the young Duke was as much in love as might be expected from the first attachment of a young gentleman of his tender years and feelings. Even her deference towards Dr. Macnab arose chiefly from the regard with which he had inspired his pupil; and but for the circumstance of her son's favourite tutor having turned out "serious," her grace might possibly have remained true to her pug-dog and carpet-work, without aspiring to the honours of evangelical canonization.

But the Doctor's derivative influence had no chance against that of its fountain-head; and the Duke of Dumbarton had attached himself too strongly to the Egertons, to admit of their being openly decried. The Doctor was therefore forced to content himself with trying to gain time, by suggestions thrown in the way of the lawyers, calculated to produce delay; yet, in spite of his hopes and machinations, there was every probability that the marriage would take place at the appointed period, and the plans of the Countess of Tiverton be accomplished.

But though the officious hints of the Doctor could not provoke her grace into sudden opposition to a match to which she had

granted her unqualified consent, they availed to render her uneasy. She began to fear that her abdication had been premature ; that Lady Ismena, instead of proving the docile, domestic wife her fancy had created, would perhaps beguile her young husband into the dissipations of the world—perhaps estrange him from his own people and his mother's house—perhaps allure him into following strange preachers, and adopting apocryphal doctrines. The refractoriness of Julius Egerton, whom she flattered herself would have fallen an easy victim to Macnabism, she regarded as an insult. She grew anxious, peevish, and disagreeable ; and either finding or fancying herself a restraint upon the pursuits of the family, contrived to make an engagement with the Harleys to spend the interim still to intervene before so grand a marriage could be heaved into motion, in a visit to a serious dwager in Dumfries-shire,—"one of their own people"—"a Christian woman"—that is, a woman full of spiritual pride and intolerant bigotry.

"Do for goodness' sake, my dear Dean, persuade her to remain quietly at Tiverton !" whispered the Countess, in dismay, to *her* infallible, Dr. Nicewig, who fortunately came to take up his residence at Wyndham at the critical moment.

"The dear Duchess is such an uncertain person, and so dependent on the influence of others, that if once she gets out of the house before the celebration of the marriage, there is no saying what whims and fancies she may take into her head. I entreat you, do not let her quit the Castle."

And the Dean, who had reasons of his own almost as cogent as those of his patroness, for desiring the alliance between Lady Ismena Egerton and the Duke of Dumbarton, readily undertook the task of persuasion.

"You must make her understand," continued Lady Tiverton, "that when at Wyndham you are constantly here ;—that is, I mean, that when residing at your living, you are always living at the Castle ;—that is—never mind—you understand me, and will express yourself clearly. The fact is, as I need not explain to you, Dean, we are not the people in the world best suited to the taste of the poor dear Duchess ; and I fancy she is beginning to feel the want of serious society—people to argue with about Bible meetings and missions—people to whom she can quote scripture for her purpose. The moment she begins to string texts together over her carpet-work, and introduce them *sans rime ni raison* into whatever conversation may be going on, *we* all sit silent with consternation ! *We* have not been used to that sort of thing. Beyond an occasional monosyllable, none of us know how to answer her !"

"But I fancied that Mr. William Egerton's son was here for the express purpose of assisting in doing the honours of Tiverton Castle to her grace ?" observed the Dean, directing a scrutinizing glance towards the countenance of his patroness.

"Julius Egerton! He has turned out by no means—the person we were lead to expect—by no means the person you represented him to Lord Tiverton! Never was there any body less of a saint. Julius is a gentlemanly young man enough—very much like other people—and seldom troublesome, or in the way. Except that he is obstinate about the discharge of his duties at that wretched village of his, nobody, I assure you, would suspect him of being a parson—any more, my dear Dean, than yourself. Instead, therefore, of affording to the Duchess of Dumbarton, as I had hoped, the style of conversation without which she cannot get through the day, he seems studiously to avoid talking of religion in mixed society; and above all, never even opens his lips, either to the Duchess or Dr. Macnab."

"Under all the circumstances, such conduct is, to say the least, ungracious," observed the Dean. "Since Mr. Julius Egerton must be aware of your ladyship's anxieties, it would be courteous to show some deference to your wishes."

"Henrietta is always assuring me that her cousin's silence is a proof of deference to my wishes; that he purposely avoids controversies with the Duchess and her Abbé, which must inevitably end in open disagreement. It is really a great nuisance, Dean, the extent to which this mania for 'seriousness' is spreading in society! No circle now-a-days is safe! Formerly, when one was making up a large party in the Castle, it was enough to collect for their entertainment one or two musical people, or private theatrical people, or dining-out people, full of good stories and bon-mots. But now, one is actually obliged to provide serious people, to preach to the dowagers!"

"One of the many proofs how thoroughly the times are out of joint!" said the Dean, with a moralizing shake of the head. "The pulpit and the rostrum are removed into the drawing-room; while, thrust into their vacant place, we find"—

"What we find *there*, very little concerns me," observed the Countess, coolly. "But I *do* consider it hard that my private circle is no longer secure from the language and habits of a conventicle! As to Julius Egerton, I admit that he does not err in that way. Lord Tiverton has no reason to repent what he has done for him; and, as soon as the parsonage is finished, he will of course settle at Burthwaite, and we shall see no more of him than of any other of our country neighbours."

A mountain being removed from the mind of the Dean of Darlington by this explanation, he readily promised his utmost efforts to assist in detaining the Duchess and her family;—and his obsequious but polished presence of mind had proved in similar instances too effectual, not to afford promise of success.

"You may as well offer your services, you know, to play at backgammon with the Duchess. She cannot get through her evening without her backgammon; and unluckily not one of us

knows the game, so that at present she is left entirely in the hands of Dr. Macnab!" observed Lady Tiverton. "Then, you must make up a little cozy dinner-party for us at Wyndham;—Mrs. Nicewig understands all that sort of thing to perfection, and will feel the necessity of making the Duchess of the utmost importance. She breakfasts in her own room very early, never later than nine; but you must manage to be here every day before that hour, and propose walking with her, or driving in the pony-phaeton. In short, my dear Dean, I rely upon you to entertain her during the remainder of her visit; of which, to say the truth, I was beginning to despair. You have a talent for that sort of thing. I used to admire how admirably you pottered on with old Lord and Lady Tiverton; and, as the Duchess knows you are to perform the ceremony for us (a difficult point, by the way, to manage, for she held most tenaciously to having the service read by her son's tutor, Dr. Macnab, a horrid, snuffling, prosy person, and a dead weight on the circle here), the Duchess is prepared for your attentions."

On this last hint the Dean of Darlington spake; and with such effect that the Duchess became at once his proselyte—the Tivertons more than ever his friends—and Dr. Macnab his obedient, humble servant. His suggestion, that the honour of officiating as priest to the nuptials of the Duke of Dumbarton belonged as naturally to his quondam tutor as that of marrying Lord Egerton to himself, relieved the Tiverton family from an engagement formed in an hour of girlish sportiveness between Lady Ismena and the Dean; to whom the prospect of a hundred-pound note and a gilt salver, was a trifle in comparison with the advantage of propitiating the discontented dowager.

Dr. Macnab himself was, strange to say, the only person dissatisfied with the exchange. His cunning eye, following the direction of that of the Dean, descried, in a moment, that Nicewig was throwing his wooden hatchet into the pool, with the hope of fishing up a golden-handled one in its place; and he was provoked at having his grumblings put to silence by the pretended magnanimity of his rival.

To a curious observer, the contrast between the two reverend aspirants after the loaves and fishes of preferment, would have been highly edifying. Burly and surly, and fostered in his burliness and surliness by twenty years' petting in the aristocratic household to which his will and wishes gave the law, Macnab, like the immortal man of the lexicon, bore down all opposition in debate per force of "sesquipedalian eloquence," seasoned with somewhat more than *quantum suff.* of self-assumption.

In utter opposition to the bearing of this haughty man, who, in other centuries, would have become a Becket or a Laud, the Dean of Darlington glided along his golden railroad—"mild as moonbeams,"—soft as a swansdown muff—insinuating as a silken-eared spaniel.

Nothing could be plainer than that the Dean of Darlington regarded his dictatorial clerical brother as an Italian greyhound would look upon the sudden introduction of an elephant into its boundaries ; an animal trampling without discretion to the right and left—not to be conciliated by its fawning, not to be interested by its gambols. The astounding bulls and heavy anathemas issued by the Pope of the Duchess of Dumbarton, wearied and annoyed him ; and he scarcely knew how sufficiently to value his own self-command in submitting to the task of taming so exquisite a monster.

Julius Egerton, meanwhile, looked on without noting the secret rivalry between his rivals. A noble mind cannot stoop to discriminate the petty manœuvres passing under its observation. Rejoicing that, by the arrival of the Dean, he was released from a thousand tedious devoirs towards his uncle, and toadyisms of the Duchess and her son, his only anxiety was lest so dispassionate a bystander should discern the nature of his intimacy with his cousin, and think it his duty to direct the attention of Lord and Lady Tiverton towards the evident infatuation of Lady Henrietta.

But of this there was in reality no danger. The Duchess provided ample occupation for Nicewig's leisure. The Duchess was aware that a dignitary of the church, who visits his living solely to fulfil the behests of the ecclesiastical law, has too much delicacy to interfere with the active duties of the stipendiary curate, resident there all the year round ; and consequently felt privileged to assume the unqualified disposal of Dr. Nicewig's time and services. She was as liberal in bestowing her tediousness upon the bland and smiling Dean, as if he were already indebted to the Dumbarton interest for the long-coveted mitre, for the attainment of which he was climbing the most slippery of all possible *mâts de cocagne*. She hobbled with him all the morning in the gardens—drove with him all the afternoon in the pony phaeton—visited his Sunday-schools, and tasted together the gruel of the workhouse, and pronounced it to be "good." They projected, in common, a new wing to the singing-loft in Wyndham Church ; and finally opened the sluice-gates of their mutual sensibility, on discovering as by a charming surprise, the new school-house rising under the auspices of the amiable Lady Ismena Egerton ; its piles of brick and sieves of mortar being prepared to lay the foundations of her ladyship's future Duchess-ship.

The poor short-sighted dowager fancied that, by all these fussy marchings and counter-marchings, she was warming and inciting the zeal of a dignitary of the established church, per force of aristocratic example ; while the Dean conceived that *his* professional suavity was taming down the asperities of a reforming Duchess, by shewing her that a dignitary of the established church need not be quite so clamorous as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Like the charlatan who envelops his bitter pills in silver

leaf, he trusted that her grace was swallowing her salutary dose without being aware of it; and that to her fascinated ear

Truths divine came mended from his tongue.

But he forgot, alas! that with such persons as the Duchess, the latest speaker has always the casting vote; and that Dr. Macnab was ever at hand—close at the ear of Eve—and secure of carrying the day by the last word, whenever victory appeared desirable.

However deeply enthralled by the growing influence of a passion which must have been evident to the whole family, had not their attention been absorbed by the more majestic sighs of a Duke, Julius Egerton was not indifferent to the vexations communicated in the affectionate letter of his father. Four months' residence at Tiverton Castle, momentous as the result was proving to his happiness, could not supersede those family affections which had embellished his earlier life.

For the sentimental afflictions of his brother John, his sympathy was somewhat abated by an announcement in the gallant Captain's two last letters, of having discovered an extraordinary resemblance between one of the charming daughters of the General of the district and the cruel fair one of Eastwick; from which Julius naturally inferred that, howbeit Miss Georgiana Heseltine's eyes might be hazel and Miss Julia Hammond's blue, the result would be the same—a new passion having, it was to be hoped, a new result. Even his kind-hearted father's sorrowing over the premature fate of poor Cherry, was probably by this time appeased by the merits of another Alderney. But for Mary, his tender anxiety remained undiminished.

It is true Miss Egerton's letters to her brother conveyed their usual impression of the serenity of a mind at ease. But the avowal by which she had modified her refusal of Lord Storby's hand, proved that her correspondence was not altogether to be trusted. Julius was beginning to understand something of the hypocrisy of lovers. He knew that, though his every idea and feeling was absorbed by his cousin Henrietta, that though, when in her presence, he thought but of *her*, and, during her absence, only of meeting her again, he had never breathed her name to any member of his family; nay, that when compelled by his father's cordial inquiries to advert to his professional prospects and future position at Burthwaite, he had replied evasively, not choosing to afford a hint of the rashly presumptuous nature of his expectations.

Might not Mary be dealing in a similar manner with himself? Julius shuddered at the thought! He dearly loved his sister. He had looked upon her destinies as secure. He had flattered himself that his good, true, gentle Mary was to be as happy as she deserved. But if his forebodings proved true, if her unsuspecting heart had been indeed captivated by the graceful manners and deceitful countenance of Dick Egerton, what was to become of

her! There were times when he resolved to write to Mary, and by a plain question ascertain the worst. But what right had *he* to rifle the secret of another, who would so deeply have resented any invasion of his own privacy? Even if assured of the fact, how could he attempt to vilify the brother of Henrietta in terms sufficiently harsh to afford due warning to his sister? He half resolved to address himself to Miss Heseltine. Georgiana, the constant companion of poor Mary, could not fail to be apprized of the truth; and there was something in the resolute firmness of her character entitling him to address her in terms of almost manly friendship. But when about to accomplish his intention, the recollection of Miss Heseltine's contemptuous adieux and prophecies of evil, which the result had all but justified, caused him to fling aside the pen. He was afraid some expression might escape him, revealing the irresolute state of his mind, and the disturbance of his feelings.

Like nine in every ten frail human beings, in short, who

See the right and yet the wrong pursue,

Julius entrusted all to procrastination. He would wait. Circumstances might occur to enlighten him without outraging his sister's feelings, or his sense of what was due to the brother of Lady Henrietta. His situation at the Castle, meanwhile, was considerably improved by the arrival of the Dean. Though as much as ever employed by his uncle to copy letters of business, and do the confidential work of a secretary, he was relieved from the odious task of playing audience to the Duchess of Dumbarton's theological vagaries, and left at perfect liberty to enjoy the society of his consoling angel. Nothing could exceed the urbanity of Dr. Nicewig, now that he was relieved from all apprehensions of rivalry. Absorbed in his own ambitions, the Dean saw nothing more in the attentions paid by Julius to his cousin, than the respectful devotion due from a poorly beneficed clergyman to the daughter of a man blest with such church preferment as the Earl of Tiverton.

As to Lady Tiverton, the falling of a thunderbolt just then on the Castle would scarcely have disturbed her equanimity. She saw every thing and every body in the most flattering point of view. Even when a letter arrived from Lord Holwell, claiming, in the most sarcastic terms, her congratulations upon the approaching marriage of his daughter Jane with Sir Edwin Skiff, she was undisturbed either by the matter or manner of the communication. It was satisfactory to have to announce to the Duchess of Dumbarton the alliance of a niece of her own with "Sir Edwin Skiff of Skiffinch Manor, only son of the late Sir Miles and Lady Theodosia Skiff, and nephew to the present Duke of Connaught—a charming young man, of noble fortune;" and though she could not help expressing, in her private conversations with Ismena, some wonder that out of Lord Holwell's half-a-dozen uninteresting daughters, Matilda Flintham alone should remain unmarried

she coolly sat down to indite a polite letter of congratulations to her sister-in-law, taking upon herself all the merit of having made up the match, by inviting Sir Edwin to the Castle for the express purpose of meeting her nieces.

While the Holwells were enjoying in the North "the happy result" thus cunningly represented by the Countess as of her own contriving, the season and its courtships progressed auspiciously at Tiverton Castle. To rides, drives, and saunterings—to boatings on the lake, or excursions in the valleys—had succeeded the fireside enjoyments of winter; and Julius Egerton often found his studies in the old-fashioned library of the second floor, where antique folios were piled up with little disturbance save from mice and spiders, frequently interrupted by the arrival of Lady Henrietta, with a list of books to be consulted in some branch of learning to which he had recently called her attention. It was of course impossible not to start up and offer his assistance in hunting them out; and *nearly* so, not to stay and aid her researches while, pencil in hand, she sat turning over the leaves of these tomes of ponderous erudition. The occupation was occasionally prolonged for hours, yet nobody ever missed them, or came to inquire what peculiar charm they found in that old library to detain them out of the family circle.

At other times, they met—it might be by chance—in visits of benevolence to the poor of the district; and, under such circumstances, naturally made their way back arm in arm to the Castle, directing their course so judiciously, that on no single occasion did they ever encounter Lady Tiverton or the Earl.

Still, notwithstanding the temptations of time and opportunity, Julius remained true to his determination of refraining from an avowal of his passion. He was too happy in the confidence accorded to him not to dread the possibility of alarming his beloved Henrietta into greater reserve. Pride forbade him to engage her confederacy, in concealing their attachment from her family till the period he had marked out to himself for an explanation with his uncle; and her gentle purity of nature convinced him that, even were he to outrage his conscience by entreating her to assist in keeping his secret, all would be instantly betrayed by the powerful effects of emotion upon a frame so delicate, a mind so timid. Far better that she should remain ignorant of all that was passing in his bosom—of all, perhaps, that was passing in her own. If a storm was destined to explode over their heads, their season of tranquillity could not be too carefully prolonged. They might enjoy undisturbed their "divine philosophy"—sport in the amusing bypaths of historical research—and, above all, sun themselves in the radiant smiles of the muse—without violating the tacit confidence accorded them by Henrietta's father and mother. For Julius it was indeed a blessed season, an oasis in the desert of his joyless life! In solitude as complete as that of the most se-

cluded hermitage, he was enjoying the society of a gentle, affectionate, intelligent being—without estranging her from the luxuries befitting the sphere of her birth. He could as little doubt that he was beloved, as that he was enthusiastically attached to his mild, forbearing, Henrietta—a more refined Mary—a more feminine Georgiana Heseltine—a perfect epitome of the fairest graces of her sex.

It was impossible just then to escape from the allusions to love and matrimony which seemed to influence the very atmosphere of Tiverton Castle. So closely did the ducal alliance approach its special licence, that the day was fixed for the arrival of the lawyers from town; to be immediately preceded by that of Lord Egerton, his brother, and uncle Adolphus (who for years had not uprooted himself from the vicinity of his club), to assist at the grand celebration. The steward's room had concocted its programme for the wedding breakfast, its projects of hogsheads of ale to be broached, and casks of champagne to be quaffed; and Monsieur Garafarasti, Lord Tiverton's Italian confectioner, was reported to be undergoing the throes of invention for a *chef-d'œuvre* of art, to grace the centre of the table. Every coach, every mail, brought down to the Castle packages of all sorts and sizes containing novelties of the toilet from London and Paris, to complete a *trousseau*, worthy the admitted elegance of Lady Ismena Egerton, and the position it was about to illustrate; and all Lady Tiverton's notions of a brilliant marriage were verging towards accomplishment. Rundell's shop was in a blaze, and Palmyre's *magazin* in a ferment. Even the simple muslin dress in which Lady Henrietta was to perform the office of bridesmaid, had made its appearance, and been pronounced faultless.

But, alas! while the Signore Garafarasti's saccharine cupids were yet in embryo, and his bowers of Eden in candied angelica were preparing to put forth their leaves, an unforeseen event seemed likely to nip their verdant promise in the bud.

On the evening which was to bring down from town Adolphus Egerton and his two nephews, only two of the party made their appearance!

"What have you done with Dick?" inquired Lord Tiverton of his brother, while Lord Egerton was shaking hands warmly with the Duke of Dumbarton, and coldly with the rector of Burthwaite.

"Isn't he here?" demanded Adolphus, trying to gather into shape the limbs which he conceived must have been dislocated in so long a journey.

"Here!—no!—It was settled that you were to come down together," remonstrated the Earl.

"Was it?—I never interfere in family arrangements. At what hour do you dine?"

"Not for this hour. I assure you, I fully expected that Dick would accompany you!"

"*How*—You didn't intend us to travel three in a *dormeuse*?" rejoined the Dowager dandy, still shuddering with cold and exhaustion.

"Egerton might have used his chaise," persisted Lord Tiverton. "You might have travelled three in a chaise."

"Thank you! I am not fond of being packed like a drum of Smyrna figs. I dare say Dick is somewhere on the road."

"But the lawyers will be here by to-morrow's mail, and the Dowager is such a *deu*—, that is, is so vastly punctilious in matters of etiquette, that I made it a great point to have all the family assembled, for the signature of the settlements."

"You must persuade her to abate an iota; for it is fifty to one that Dick will not be here in time. Tell her he could not be spared from his parliamentary duties. Where shall I find the groom of the chambers? I want to know about my room."

"His parliamentary duties!" ejaculated Lord Tiverton, who maintained his former habit of replying only to those questions in which he was interested. "As if the Duchess were not aware that we are in the recess!"

"I fancied she was too great a saint to be so versed in sublunary things. Well, find some other excuse. Say he has got the typhus fever, or the plague, or any thing else you please. Is Morise still with you? Thank God! I trust he has not lost his hand at a *pâté de bécassines à la Flamande*?"

Lord Tiverton, finding it impossible to extract any thing like information from the arch-egotist of St. James's Street, betook himself to his elder son; who was so absorbed in wondering whether he had paid his compliments to the Dumbartons in precisely the tone exacted by their relative rank and future connection, as to be scarcely more communicative than his uncle.

"Hasn't Dol informed you of the cause of my brother's absence?" said he, in reply to his father's hurried interrogatory. "I really know nothing more on the subject than Dol."

"Who knows nothing!" cried the Earl, generalized out of all patience.

"He is aware that Dick promised to start with us from the Clarendon the night before last; and that, as his britszka did not make its appearance, I sent to his house."

"And what did you learn there?"

"That neither he nor his servant had been seen all day. There was no message for me—no note; and so, not choosing to keep the horses waiting another hour, we set off."

"Perfectly right!—I would not for the world that all three of you should have been wanting. We must make the best excuses we can to the Duchess."

There was no need, however, to exercise much ingenuity of mendacity. The serious Duchess was so utterly astonished at every word, look, and gesture of Adolphus Egerton, as to have no

curiosity touching any missing member of the family. The secluded habits of her life had kept her free from all collision with the dandy world—whether smoke-dried specimens such as Dol, or blooming dolls such as Sir Edwin Skiff; and, though the latter had passed out of her memory like a phantasmagorical figure, she was sufficiently interested in an uncle of the future Duchess of Dumbarton, to consider only too curiously the peculiarities of the former. The exhibition of similar follies and vices failed indeed to disgust her when veiled by the cold, high-bred manners and correct conversation of Lord Egerton, the model young-nobleman of fashion; but she exchanged wondering glances with Dr. Macnab, at every avowal of levity hazarded by the Preadamite Adonis, whose angels appeared to be opera-dancers—whose saints, clerks of the kitchen—whose martyrs, the tailor tribe.

Her grace was horror-struck to perceive that his irregularities of speech called no blush into the cheeks of her daughter-in-law: nay, that Lady Ismena honoured with a smile, more than one sally of doubtful meaning, in which Adolphus indulged, as the last jest current at the clubs, for the edification of his country cousins. Though determined that one member at least of the Egerton family should never be admitted as a guest under the roof of Dumbarton Castle, she could not reconcile herself to the notion of affinity with one whose polished *double intente* was far more offensive than even the undisguised coarseness of Lord Holwell.

It did not of course occur to a woman of so much good feeling as the Duchess, that Adolphus Egerton was doubling the dose of his usual profligacy, to mark his contemptuous abhorrence of the presence of his nephew “the parson;” being, in fact, the only token of recognition he deigned to bestow on Julius Egerton, who was too much engrossed by admiring the effect produced by a wreath of myrtle entwining the usually unadorned brows of Lady Henrietta, to be sensible of the annoyance designed.

The dinner, like all family solemnities of a similar kind, passed heavily enough. Lord and Lady Tiverton were out of sorts, not only on account of the absence of their younger son, but because the Duchess of Dumbarton had been left to the attentions of Adolphus by the non-appearance of the Dean of Darlington; who, five minutes before dinner, chose to send a mysterious excuse. It was only the two happy couples who remained unconscious of the discomfiture of the party; but even Julius began to notice that something was amiss, when, as they were all leaving the dining-room, he overheard Lord Tiverton exclaim to his brother, “For God’s sake, be more cautious! I assure you she knows not a syllable of the matter!” adding, (after Adolphus had ejaculated in reply—“Come, come!—the whole business was alluded to, with the names at full length, in the ‘Age,’ two months ago!”)—“The Duchess is quite out of the way of scandals of that description. Were even a surmise of the kind to reach her ear, the effect might be fatal.”

That this allusion referred to Dick Egerton he had little doubt ; and when, ten minutes afterwards, in crossing the hall, he was touched on the arm by the Dean of Darlington, who stole on tiptoe out of the library to beg that, without alarming the family, he would send Lord Tiverton to him in his lordship's private study, the name of his cousin instantly burst from his lips.

"The news has reached you then ?" said the Dean, with an air of vexation. "I was in hopes I should have been the first to break it to poor Lord Tiverton !"

Satisfied, when he found that the task, whatever might be its import, of which he seemed ambitious, was still at his disposal, the Dean recommended despatch so strenuously, that Julius was forced to go in search of the Earl, without the smallest mitigation of his anxieties ; and for the ensuing hour he remained in the saloon exerting himself to conceal from the rest of the party the fact of his uncle's absence.

He saw Lord Egerton dexterously called away by the groom of the chambers, and felt convinced that something serious was the matter ; yet still retained sufficient *sang-froid* to divert as much as possible the attention of the Duchess of Dumbarton from the coolly insolent pleasantries of Adolphus the Audacious.

At length his own turn came. "My Lord wishes to speak to you a moment in his study," was whispered in his ear ; and on entering the room, he saw the Earl pacing up and down with hurried footsteps ; Lord Egerton standing with his coat-flaps in his hands, in consequential possession of the hearth-rug ; and the Dean sitting with an air of compassionate magnanimity, his eyes fixed upon the intemperate movements of his patron.

"Julius !" said the Earl, stopping short as his nephew entered the room ; then, advancing towards him, he took his hand with emotion—the first he had experienced for years—and gazed so earnestly in his face, that young Egerton instantly conceived some misfortune must have occurred to his father.

"What—*what* has happened ?" cried he, gasping for breath, as he returned the pressure of Lord Tiverton's hand.

"A deathblow to this unlucky marriage !" replied he ; as if his nephew were as deeply interested as himself in seeing Lady Ismena become a duchess. "Dick has gone off with that confounded Mrs. Vassyll !"

"Mrs. Vassyll eloped from her husband !" was the involuntary ejaculation of Julius ; and, as the Earl seemed incapable of reply, the Dean nodded an affirmative ;—adding in a confidential whisper, "The news reached me at six o'clock to-day ; and, instead of coming here to dinner, I made a circuit, and drove round by West Hill to ascertain the truth of the report."

"And did you see Mr. Vassyll ?" inquired the bewildered Julius in the same low tone of commiseration.

"See him ? My dear Sir, of what are you thinking ? I have

not been on speaking terms with the Vassylls these two years past. That unlucky glebe question, you know"—

"But at such a moment," interrupted Julius.

"At such a moment, I conceive, he would hardly wish to see his nearest connection."

"You ascertained, then, from his servants"—

"That Mrs. Vassyll has not been seen since nine o'clock last night," interrupted the Dean, "when she retired to her room on pretence of indisposition. This morning she was not to be found; and the state of her room avouched that the delinquent had not slept under her husband's roof."

"Still, there is no proof of her having eloped with my—with Mr. Egerton? A thousand accidents may have occurred to her."

"In the distraction of the first alarm, Vassyll caused the river to be examined, and the ponds dragged; upon which, to avoid further exposure, the gatekeeper admitted that his lady had passed the lodge at ten last night; that, after her attaining the high-road, the sound of wheels was heard; and that the horses were directed towards the south."

"Poor Vassyll!" ejaculated Julius, with a heavy sigh.

"Common report—the innuendoes of the public prints—and various other causes—naturally point out that this foolish woman has"—

"It is useless to enter anew into particulars," haughtily interrupted Lord Egerton, who had no idea of wasting time upon the enlightenment of his obscure cousin. "All that remains is for Lord Tiverton to explain his wishes on the subject."

"Yes—let me explain my wishes. Julius will, I am sure, afford me all the assistance in his power," added the Earl, throwing himself despondingly into a seat. "But I fear 'tis plain enough that Dick is lost past redemption;—and that Ismy will have her brother's folly to thank for the utter blighting of her prospects in life. You see, my dear boy," he continued, addressing his nephew in a lower voice, "we are in hopes nothing has at present transpired of this foolish fellow's wretched escapade; and if old Vassyll could only be brought to reason (which, for the sake of his children, may possibly be the case), we might still get the matter hushed up! To be sure, it was the most unnecessary thing our forming an intimacy with those people at West Hill!"

"Lord Tiverton means," amended the Dean (who in his tutor years had been much in the habit of finding meaning for the platitudes of the Egerton family), "that if Mrs. Vassyll could be persuaded to return home before the news of her rash act gets abroad, and if her husband could be prevailed upon to receive her, the thing might be got over; and the sense of propriety of the Duchess of Dumbarton remain unshocked at this important crisis."

"Surely no woman would attempt such a proceeding as that of Mrs. Vassyll, unless she had made up her mind to dare the worst,"

replied Julius, gravely. "And *who* could venture to propose such a compromise as receiving her back under such circumstances, to a man of honour like Mr. Vassyll?"

"To preserve his honour untarnished for the sake of his family, he might consent to receive her—at least for a time," said Lord Egerton, stiffly.

"To preserve his disgrace from publicity," corrected Julius, without positively addressing his cousin.

"But as far as he knows—as far as we are sure ourselves—she may have gone off alone; and, since ignorance is bliss, why should he consider it necessary to clear up the uncertainty of the case? Some pique, some conjugal quarrel, may have tempted her to throw herself on the protection of her family. *Her* family!—*such* a family!—city merchants, or something of that kind," muttered Lord Tiverton, by way of parenthesis. "Never was any thing so out of place as our intimacy with those people at West Hill!"

"Vassyll is scarcely a man from whose violence it could be necessary for his wife to seek protection," observed Julius, gravely; "nor should I imagine Mrs. Vassyll a woman likely to attempt a solitary elopement."

"Nor I, nor any other reasonable being!" interrupted the Dean. "The object is to persuade her *husband* that such might be the case. Vassyll is an unsuspecting, good sort of man, who could be made to believe any thing."

"A fellow who has never lived in society; not the least a man of the world. As I said before, I never *could* see what induced my family to strike up an intimacy with the people at West Hill!" murmured Lord Tiverton, provoked to find his nephew so slow of apprehension.

"Could all this be effected by the good offices of a friend, we flatter ourselves that things might remain in *statu quo*," added the Dean, in his most conciliatory tone. "Lord Tiverton is prepared to make the utmost sacrifices. You must have noticed that, in order to enable Mrs. Vassyll to retain her place in the county after the bold insinuations of the newspapers, Lady Tiverton and her daughters received her, some time ago at the Castle, as if nothing had happened, so as to leave no excuse to the neighbourhood for turning its back upon her."

"Though, Heaven knows," interrupted the Earl, "the neighbourhood had every reason to be astonished that under *any* circumstances we should have stooped to neighbourly sociability with new-comers in the county, such as the people at West Hill."

"A proposal of so delicate a nature," mildly resumed the Dean, "could only ename, you must be well aware, from some connection of the family, authorized to treat in its name; and Lord Tiverton is of opinion," he continued, speaking more deliberately, and fixing his eye upon Julius to investigate every turn of his countenance, "that no one could fill the office so effectively as

yourself—as bearing the family name, and being at the same time possessed of the esteem and confidence of Mr. Vassyll.”

A vivid flush on the cheek of Julius Egerton would have revealed to more sensitive spectators his sense of indignity at being requested to propose to a man of integrity a dishonourable action. But to this first impulse, which like most first impulses was a just one, succeeded the worldly consideration, that “*l’offenseur était le père de Chimène* ;” and that to hazard a reproof to the father of Lady Henrietta Egerton, was to pronounce his own doom.

“You will observe, my dear Sir,” pursued the Dean, detecting his irresolution, “that the measure we are desirous to propose to poor Vassyll, is one as important to his own family as to that of Lord Tiverton. Nothing has at present transpired of this unfortunate woman’s indiscretion ; and by contriving to bring her back to West Hill, and by her immediate reappearance in society give the lie to any scandalous rumours which may have arisen, we shall restore a mother to two deserted babes, and a wife—probably a repentant and heart-broken wife—to the arms of her husband !”

Involuntarily, Julius shrugged his shoulders ; while Lord Egerton seemed disposed to conceal his face from observation by inclining it over his well-varnished boots.

“To your cousin, I need scarcely add, that such an act would be salvation !” continued the Dean, in the tone of mild conciliation he was in the habit of using for the summing up of his discourses in Darlington Cathedral. “I consider the ruin of my pupil (one of the most promising young men that ever issued from a tutor’s hands)—I consider, I say, his ruin sealed for ever, from the hour that sees Mrs. Vassyll thrown upon his hands !”

“But she cannot and shall not be thrown upon his hands ?” cried Lord Tiverton, almost frantic. “You don’t consider, my dear Dean—you don’t consider, my dear Julius, what it would be to a young man of Dick Egerton’s position in the world—Dick Egerton’s expectation in parliament—Dick Egerton’s importance to his family—to throw himself away upon a woman older than himself—a woman of no connection—no consequence—no any thing on earth to account for his infatuation in favour of those people at West Hill !”

“I *do* consider it ; and I consider also what it would be to Mrs. Vassyll’s husband, father, and innocent children, were she to brand herself with the infamy you apprehend,” said Julius, sternly.

“And then, Ismena ! poor Ismena’s brilliant hopes to be sacrificed by the folly of a good-for-nothing woman, whom we ought to have left to her original insignificance, instead of raising her from her fitting level by our notice of those people at West Hill !” persisted Lord Tiverton ; while his nephew, aware that his eloquence

would ill suffice to inspire his lordship at a moment's notice with feeling and understanding, remained discreetly silent.

"Should you consent to oblige Lord Tiverton," resumed the Dean.

"Surely, Lord Egerton—surely, Sir, you might *yourself* more effectually interfere," interrupted Julius, with indignation. "To say the truth, *I* cannot see things altogether in the light in which you wish me to represent them to this unfortunate man."

"Dick Egerton's brother could not decently present himself at West Hill!" observed the Earl.

"And from the tithe feud existing between us, I am convinced Mr. Vassyll would refuse to grant *me* even an audience," added the Dean. "*You*, my dear Sir, are, I understand, in high favour with him. He was speaking of you the other day in the highest terms to the James Davises."

"In the same high terms in which he used to speak of my cousin!" exclaimed Julius, shrugging his shoulders, with a bitter smile.

The Dean directed towards his patron a glance purporting to say—"I told you so! This stubborn young fellow will not hear of it!"

"At all events," observed Julius, as if aware of the construction placed upon his conduct, "I can make the attempt. I can but be denied admittance at West Hill; and for the promotion of family peace, no less than in anxious compliance with any request expressed by my uncle, I am willing to do my best. I will hasten to change my dress, and proceed by the bridle-road to West Hill."

"Thanks, thanks! as you say, there is not a minute to be lost; by to-morrow the business will be bruited all over the county!" exclaimed Lord Tiverton, gratefully seizing the hand of his nephew; and even Lord Egerton condescended to advance three paces off the hearth-rug, to express himself grateful for the interposition of Julius, as he hurried out of the room to prepare for his ride. The whole party seemed to pin its faith on the success of his mission. They could not fancy it possible that any man in his senses would forbear to sneak out of a scrape into which he had been precipitated by the errors of other people.

Meanwhile, poor Julius, with burning cheeks and a heavy heart, set forth upon his agitating expedition; nor was it till he found himself galloping by a frosty moonlight along the solitary road between the borders of the Tiverton Castle estate and those of West Hill, communing with his conscience concerning his conduct and its motives, that he was sufficiently master of his thoughts to comprehend the full extent of the duty he had undertaken.

The man of the world and the Christian priest were at war within his soul:—the St. John of Helstone was sadly at variance with the gentlemanly young man of Tiverton Castle. He per-

suaded himself, however, that he was not wronging his vocation by addressing to the lady at West Hill and her accusers, the same exhortation issued by a more hallowed authority to the delinquent of an earlier age. He knew that there was forgiveness in the promises of the gospel for such guilt as he had undertaken to palliate.

But should he succeed in persuading poor Vassyll to extend his pardon to the offender, what would be the award of honourable men against one who dared to present to the endurance of society the person of his polluted wife? Was he justified in exposing the close of a blameless life to such unmerited obloquy?

CHAPTER X.

FASHION, FOLLY, AND DEATH.

ON arriving at West Hill, it was no surprise to Julius Egerton to be refused admittance to Mr. Vassyll. He came prepared to be denied—he came even prepared with patience, should he be denied harshly.

“Is your master retired to rest, then?” inquired he of the venerable butler, who had been summoned by the footman for better authority, when Julius persisted in claiming admittance.

“*To rest?*”—reiterated the attached old man, who had been the faithful servitor of Mr. Vassyll throughout the perils of his colonial administration. “No, no, Sir!—Master will never rest again on this side the grave! He has not tasted food since the mischief came out; and, if it wasn’t for leaving the children, I warrant he’d have been off hours ago for London.”

“That would have been a sad aggravation of the evil!” observed Julius, in a tone of so much kindliness, that the old man could not forbear adding,—“If master had any friend—any comforter—to advise with him, I think his mind might be made easier.” Then suddenly recollecting all the good reported in the neighbourhood of the young rector of Burthwaite, as a being of different nature from every other member of the Egerton family, he added,—“If he would only consent, Sir, to see some gentleman of your cloth! But master and the Dean yonder at Wyndham are not on the best of terms; and as to the curate, the poor soul has enough to do, God knows, without increasing his cough by riding across the mountains of a frosty night, to offer consolations that, may be, might not be listened to!”

On this hint, Julius pleaded anew; and very little further persuasion sufficed to obtain access to the sufferer. The old man consented to take in his message to Mr. Vassyll; and the visiter

followed so closely on the heels of his messenger, that refusal was impossible.

Julius was unprepared, however, for the sudden emotion caused by his first interview with a stranger since the discovery of his shame. When Julius approached, poor Vassyll threw himself into his arms, and wept bitterly.

"I was in hopes I had more fortitude!" faltered he at length, struggling to recover himself. "But this has been an agonizing shock!—a bitter, bitter trial!"

Uncertain whether Mr. Vassyll were as yet cognizant of Dick Egerton's share in the proceedings of his wife, Julius at first abstained from more than general avowals of sympathy. But poor Vassyll seemed to find relief in opening his heart to one for whose sentiments and principles he entertained respect; and soon began to accuse himself without reserve as the origin of the evil.

"I knew her weakness of head and heart," said he. "I was aware of her foible for emulating the vanities and sharing the pleasures of the great. But the dread of giving her pain, the false pride of not choosing to figure before her and her giddy circle as a curmudgeon husband, denying to his young and lovely wife the pleasures which his age rendered him incapable of appreciating, caused me to sanction her intimacy with the Egertons;—nay, let me make a clear breast of it, I was myself flattered and gratified by the homage rendered to poor Anna's beauty by those whose opinion gives the law in matters of vanity. Yes!—in all that has rendered my home desolate, I have much—*much* to answer for."

So indulgent a frame of mind seemed propitious to the projects of Julius; and after gradual preparation, and in a voice tremulous from emotion, he finally hinted at the compromise suggested by Lord Tiverton.

"Suffer me," said he, "to go in search of Mrs. Vassyll. At present I have no clue to her retreat; but my desire to be of service might, perhaps, enable me to trace her out."

"For what purpose?" demanded Vassyll, in grave perplexity. "What object could be achieved by the meeting?"

Julius's heart sank within him as he hesitatingly replied, "To use my influence—the influence of a minister of the gospel—of an impartial friend—to induce her to return to the path of duty."

"To return *home*?" inquired Mr. Vassyll, in a hollow voice, clasping his hands together in despairing grief: and, as Julius found no courage to reply to the question, a heavy silence ensued.

"May I hope," inquired Egerton at length, alarmed by the almost ghastly paleness of his companion—"may I hope, my dear sir, that you will empower me to undertake this mission of peace?"

"Let these answer you, these grey hairs, which she has dishonoured!" cried Vassyll, with a distracted gesture. "Am I to be degraded in the estimation of all honest men, by allowing a

wanton to sit at my board, barely concealing her contempt and abhorrence of her husband, in order that a favourite of the fashionable world may retain some hold upon the enjoyments and homage of society?"

"As an act of grace—as an act of Christian forgiveness—of mere humanity toward a fallen woman"—Julius began, his voice faltering through consciousness that he was advocating a guilty cause.

"You know not half her ingratitude, half her cruelty!" said Vassyll, with deep feeling. "*She* knew the warmth of the affection she was outraging—*she* could appreciate my services to her family—my devotion to herself—my pride in the honest name her frailty has levelled with the dust. She knew how I prized her—how I trusted her—how I loved her!" he added, in a voice inarticulate from sobs. And again Julius discerned in his softening mood a favourable moment to press the virtue of forgiveness.

"Follow me, and you shall judge between us!" cried Vassyll, starting wildly from his seat. And, having led his anxious counsellor by the arm into an adjoining room, he drew aside the curtains from his sleeping children, and burst into a fresh agony of tears. "Look here!" cried he—"look upon those innocent creatures, and tell me whether I am justified in suing back to their endearments, a mother disgraced, even into utter corruption! I have had them brought hither to bear me company in my affliction," he continued, stooping over his little girl, and kissing the glossy curls clustering upon her fair forehead. "They are all that is left me—all that remains of my household happiness. Poor creatures—poor, poor little ones! They asked for her to-night again and again before they went to sleep. To the last she was affectionate to *them*. With me she had grown cold and capricious; but she loved the children to the last. Ay! and she was dearly loved by them in return. I dread their waking to-morrow! What shall I do to comfort the poor little souls when they begin to understand that their mother is gone from them for ever?"

"You have offered your children as an answer to my arguments," said Julius, mildly. "Let me offer my arguments once more in reply to these afflicting questions. For these infants' sake, dear sir, I beseech you receive back their mother! Not to your heart, not to your confidence, but to your roof. For the love she bore them and that they bear her, vouchsafe to take pity on her folly!"

Long, very long was the perplexing discussion pursued. At moments Mr. Vassyll seemed inexorable with the strength of virtue—inexorable with the weakness of shrinking from the world's dread laugh. At others, the mildness of his benevolent nature prevailed. Pity for the young creature he had taken from her happy home to let fall into the darkness of an abyss—pity for the unhappy woman, cast from the honour and regard of a respectful household upon the tender mercies of a libertine, pleaded the cause of the offender. But it was not till an advanced hour

of the night that Julius succeeded in obtaining Mr. Vassyll's reluctant consent to his departure for London ; there to concert with the Lumsden family upon the best mode of rescuing the fallen one from utter perdition.

"They are good people. Even in his daughter's behalf, Lumsden will require nothing of me inconsistent with my honour," said George Vassyll, in a melancholy tone, on taking leave of his young friend. "Tell him that were he able to accompany her back, and remain with her here till permanent arrangements are effected, I would quit West Hill for a time in order to facilitate his plans. Above all, spare *her*, and bid *him* spare *her*—unhappy creature—as far as conciliation is possible. Having made up *my* mind to leniency, she must not be harshly dealt with by other people. I am not likely to be long a burthen upon her patience, and my last days shall not be embittered by an act of vengeance.

Having thus achieved his point, Julius left the unhappy man watching by the bedside of his children, and hurried back to the Castle. But though it was scarcely past the time which, for six months of the year, found Lord Tiverton in active pursuance of the duties and pleasures of the London season, he had not discomposed himself so far as to sit up. "My Lord had retired for the night." As Julius was to set off at daybreak, he judged it necessary to ask admittance to his uncle's room to receive his last instructions concerning the journey.

"Upon my life, you have manœuvred the matter to admiration!" cried the Earl, rubbing his eyes, while listening to his nephew's recital. "Don't lose a moment, pray, when you reach London, in finding out Dick. Inform him, I will never see his face again unless he persuades this foolish jade to profit by the good dispositions of her husband ; and tell him his mother and sister are furious at his having renewed the connection, after all the sacrifices they made for his sake to keep up the respectability of those people at West Hill. Let him know that his uncle and brother scarcely know what face to put upon his losing himself so far as to have his family name confounded with those of persons so every way beneath his sphere of society ; and say that"—

"It would be as well, perhaps, for your lordship to signify your opinions *in writing* to Mr. Egerton," observed Julius coldly. "I am proceeding to London with the view of bringing back Mrs. Vassyll to her family, and may have no opportunity for confidential communication with her companion."

"True, very true! To accomplish bringing her back, to get Dick Egerton's hands clear of her, I quite agree with you that we must spare neither trouble nor expense. In the pocket-book on my *secrétaire*, by the way, you will find a *carte blanche* on my banker. Do what you will—promise what you will—only, for God's sake, get the matter hushed up ;—and for the future, it is to be hoped that ass old Vassyll will take better care of his wife."

After lending an unwilling ear to this apostrophe, Julius was almost tempted to resign the office he had accepted! But the weakness of his heart suggested anew the importance of conferring an obligation upon the family of Lady Henrietta; and, long before Adolphus Egerton's valet-de-chambre had called for his chocolate, his nephew was twenty miles on his road towards London.

To obtain access to Dick Egerton's *sanctum sanctorum* proved, however, a more difficult affair than to penetrate into the woful precincts of West Hill. Although, as one of the representatives of the nation, secure from the incursions of the law, Dick had no better protection than the slight barrier of "Not at home" against the civilly impertinent visits of scores of claimants, apt at that chilly season of the year to render honourable members peculiarly grateful to their privilege of parliament;—and there was something in the sober habit and grave decided manner of the Rector of Burthwaite, which, to his cousin's Yellowplush, seemed indicative of a coachmaker's collecting clerk.

At length, after some hesitation, Julius hazarded an inquiry whether there were not a lady on a visit to Mr. Egerton.

"A lady a-staying with master, sir? No, indeed!"—was the indignant reply of the confidential gentleman, on finding the stranger so audacious as to pry into the mysteries of the bachelor establishment. Then, beginning to surmise in the intruder one of his master's scrupulous northern constituents, he added in a tone of magnanimity worthy a Scipio or a Wilberforce, "I beg you to know, sir, that my master, Mr. Egerton, be a single man, and never have no ladies here, whatsoever. I haven't seen an individual of that sex in his house, sir, barring his housekeeper, who's stricken in years, since I've been in his service."

Hopeless of effecting his purpose in the character of a stranger, Julius now produced his card as a passport into the house. But though the name inscribed thereon announced a member of his master's family, Yellowplush was still on his guard; nor was it till the magic touch of a sovereign had unlocked the gates of his heart, that he undertook to introduce the pressing visiter into the drawing-room, to await Mr. Egerton's return to dress for dinner. The dragon of the bachelor establishment even condescended to state, after being thus appeased, that "maybe his master might be heard of at the Burlington Hotel, where he had friends staying from the country."

Though satisfied that he was now in a fair way towards the accomplishment of his benevolent project, Julius was vexed to find himself in furtive possession of his cousin's apartment. It seemed like an arbitrary invasion of his privacy. There were letters scattered about;—there were pet passages scored with pencil in the books into which he occasionally dived for pearls to adorn the periods of his parliamentary eloquence;—there were portraits on the wall—prints in a portfolio, of opera-dancers, winners of the

Derby, and Keepsake beauties, each of which did a tale unfold, of indiscretions past, present, or to come. There were cards of invitation—pressing letters from dukes and other duns of the trading classes, alike demanding payment for their I O U's and L S D's. There were threats from coach-makers, entreaties from horse-dealers, remonstrances from abandoned Helens and obsolete Marias. There was, in short, all the circumstantial evidence of a life of *rouerie* and vice.

Conscious of being obnoxious to his cousin, Julius felt that he was out of place behind the scenes of his little theatre; and it did not surprise him that Dick Egerton, on finding him installed in the very heart of his sanctuary, should receive him with the utmost coldness, and inquire his business there, much as he would have asked the same question of his hatter's or shoemaker's apprentice.

But the moment Dick Egerton was made to understand that Julius appeared before him as an accredited mediator—a man on conciliatory thoughts intent—his stiffness relaxed. He thanked his cousin frankly for his good intentions; and became, in a moment, the Dick Egerton of old times—the Dick Egerton of Storbey Castle—or rather, a Dick Egerton of still freer manners, still more companionable familiarity. The change was as the transformation of a pantomime.

"This is the devil of a business!" cried he, pushing his favourite carriage chair towards the visiter. "I might as well have had an extinguisher placed upon my head as become the hero of such an adventure! It is not only the most unlucky thing that could have occurred to me, but it has occurred at the most unlucky moment"——

"Mrs. Vassyll, then, is with you, as I surmised?" interrupted Julius, shocked at his levity.

"*Here?* No, indeed!—I wouldn't hear of her coming to this house! The business would have been blown at once; and I should have had what the vulgarity of newspaper rhetoric is pleased to call the gentlemen of the long robe, knocking at my door with their blue bags under their arms, before I knew what I was about!"

"You were unprepared, then, for the rash step Mrs. Vassyll has taken?"

"I believe you! Never was there so gross an act of folly—an act that will be the ruin of *me*! I shall lose my seat (the people in my devil of a borough being cursed particular—one half dissenters, and the other half old maids), and, by Jove, I can't afford to be out of parliament. Between ourselves, I am dipped beyond what I dare own to the governor; who has every thing, you know, in his own power, except my deuce of a younger brother's fortune, which was melted before I left college."

"And what has become, then, of this unfortunate woman?"

"Of Anna? She is at an hotel—I *insisted* upon her going to

an hotel. Why add to her imprudence by furnishing proofs for old Vassyll to swell his lawyer's briefs with, and magnify his damages?"

"I fancy Mr. Vassyll is in no want of either," said Julius, gravely. And he proceeded to open his negotiations by promising and demanding concessions.

"You really think he would take her back again? You really want to persuade her to return to West Hill?" interrupted his cousin. "My dear fellow, you would be the saving of me! I assure you, this plaguy business has driven me to my wits' end. Think of having a woman thrown on my hands just now, when I have not twenty guineas at my disposal, and was setting off to make the agreeable to the governor at Ismy's wedding, in hopes he would book up for me. Persuade her to return to her family, and my obligation will be unspeakable! What on earth tempted her to *jeter son bonnet par dessus les moulins* in this way, I cannot conceive. Things had always gone on so quietly, (old Vassyll—whether he saw through our *liaison* or not—making no fuss;) and even when those cursed newspapers chose to take it up, my mother managed matters with such admirable tact in the neighbourhood, that he never heard a word of it, and Anna was kept afloat in the county; so that"——

"We need not enter just now into these particulars," interrupted Julius, somewhat impatiently. "Time is precious. Enable me to see Mrs. Vassyll, and communicate to her the merciful intentions of her husband; and, should I succeed in determining her to return to West Hill, I will immediately communicate with Mr. Lumsden."

"With Lumsden! Is that vulgar old brute to have any influence in the arrangement?" demanded Dick, with a supercilious laugh. "My dear fellow, I wish you well through your interview! Mrs. Vassyll is, as I need not tell you, a charming woman—(that is, *was*, for she went off dreadfully last season). But you never beheld more excruciating people than the rest of the family:—old Lumsden in his black gaiters—and the brothers-in-law, who walk every day to their business in the city with umbrellas under their arms—to say nothing of the misses, who are fine, affected, and insupportable! The old people have never chosen to see Anna since the abominable paragraphs that appeared two months ago in the newspapers; and (I'm afraid) you may find some difficulty."

"Mr. Lumsden resides, I believe, in Devonshire Street?" demanded Julius, coming to the point.

"Yes—a hundred miles off—close to the Regent's Park. I have had plenty of work, I can tell you, for my horses, with this cursed affair."

After some further discussion, Dick Egerton carried off his cousin to the hotel, which, as it was dusk, he felt himself pri-

vileged to visit. "We had better get the scene over before dinner," said he. "I dine out; and should not be able to get away early enough for your purpose."

As they approached the hotel, Julius felt embarrassed at the idea of presenting himself, under circumstances so distressing, to the woman whom he had last beheld in a happy home, surrounded by the respectabilities of life. He conceived that the interview must be as painful to the fallen Anna as to himself. But he had not reckoned upon the demoralizing influence of two years' familiarity with vice and hypocrisy, and two months' exposure to the scarcely concealed scorn of society. Mrs. Vassyll received him without a blush, and his companion without a smile; every feeling of her hardened heart being absorbed in indignation against the conduct of her callous lover.

Deeply impressed with the magnitude of her claims upon the generosity of young Egerton, she had fled from home, smarting under the insults inflicted, unobserved by her husband, by the Waltons, Davises, and the lesser fry of her country neighbours; believing that she should be received with open arms, and satisfied, from the exertions already made in her favour by the family at Tiverton Castle, that they would do their utmost to restore her to the favour of society. She saw other *divorcées* welcomed into the fashionable world—other runaway wives smuggled back again into the sunshine of fashion; and felt persuaded that the Honourable Mrs. Egerton would enjoy a far more brilliant position than had been accorded to the beautiful Mrs. Vassyll.

Instead of this, she had been, if not utterly disavowed by the idol of her folly, so coldly, so reproachfully received, as must have cut a more sensitive woman to the soul. But, lost to every better feeling, Mrs. Vassall grew angry. She saw that, instead of being the more considered for having emancipated herself from the thralldom of her humdrum home, even Dick Egerton treated her with less respect, now that she was no longer at the head of a good establishment, protected by the eminence and consideration of her husband.

The propositions of Julius Egerton were accordingly received with a degree of exaggerated joy, intended to mark to him who had so cruelly disappointed her expectations her sense of injury, and her anxiety to escape from the sight of his *insouciance*. With a bosom swelling with rage, and eyelids heavy with tears which pride enabled her to retain unshed, she thanked Julius for his good offices, expressed herself grateful for Vassyll's forbearance, and assured him she should be ready and willing to accompany him back to West Hill the following morning!

"It is useless for you to see my father on the subject," she continued, in a suppressed tone, as if afraid of giving free course to her voice, lest her emotions should burst forth. "The interview could only be productive of annoyance to all parties. There need

not the arguments of my family to convince me that, whatever may have been the conduct of others, *I* have acted like a fool. Mr. Vassyll is only too good, too forbearing; and I am willing to endure whatever mortification may be in store for me, so that I may escape the wretchedness of obligation to persons who have become the objects of my contempt."

From certain indications of the glittering eye and quickened respiration, with which the experience of the last few days had rendered him familiar, Dick Egerton probably foresaw at this juncture an effusion of feeling amounting to a fit of hysterics; for after whispering to his cousin, with a hurried nod of adieu, that he must be off or he should not be in time for a pressing engagement, he hastened towards the door. For an instant, he seemed to meditate an attempt at a kinder parting from the wretched woman, who sat with contracted nostrils and silent lips, growing paler and paler every moment; and was about to re-approach her with a word or gesture of endearment. But something in the expression of her eyes at that moment warned him to forbear; and the next, he was heard whistling down the stairs, by way of keeping himself in countenance; leaving to Julius Egerton those arrangements for their departure on the morrow, for which he was aware that his father's cunning liberality had furnished the supplies.

Mrs. Vassyll witnessed his exit without the discomposure of a muscle, or the utterance of a syllable. She even remained silent and motionless for some minutes, with her eyes fixed upon the door which had closed upon him. But so powerful had been the struggle of her feelings, that when Julius, receiving no answer to the first kind and considerate inquiry he addressed to her, reiterated the question, she moved her lips to reply without rendering her words audible, and, in another moment, fell insensible at his feet.

Julius did not recall the ungrateful offender by whom her agitation was provoked. He felt that, in his cousin's absence, he should exercise a happier influence over the poor victim of vanity before him; and was rejoiced when, on her slow restoration to consciousness, Mrs. Vassyll proposed that, instead of delaying till the morrow, they should leave London that very night.

"I will never see him again!" said she, with firm voice, but quivering lips. "Perhaps when he finds me gone—but no matter! I can be ready as soon as you please. I have no attendants, no baggage. I am not now the pampered Anna Vassyll of West Hill," she continued, with a ghastly smile. "I have even been reproached by — by the person who was here just now, for the squeamish folly which determined me to leave every thing behind me but the means of conveyance to London, when I quitted my husband's house!"

Tears of wounded pride coursed down her pale cheeks as she spoke; and Julius was so apprehensive that increasing indisposi-

tion might retard their journey, and so certain her feelings would become more calm when the crisis of departure was past, that he proposed having a travelling carriage in waiting in a couple of hours. The interim he considered it his duty to devote to an explanation with the family of Mrs. Vassyll, and after an earnest entreaty to his unhappy charge, to let no vacillation of mind during his absence interfere with their plans, he hastened to Devonshire Street.

"Is Mr. Lumsden at home?" he inquired of the footman, who answered his knock with the sort of frightened astonishment that avouches the rarity of evening visits in the English metropolis.

"No, sir; that is—perhaps, sir, you are not aware of what has happened in the family?" stammered the man, in utter consternation.

"Yes—I am perfectly aware of it. But I have business of importance to communicate; and am on the point of leaving town, or I would not intrude at this hour," replied Egerton, with earnestness.

"If you'll please to give me your name, sir," said the man, who had hitherto only unclosed a small angle of the unlighted door to answer the questions of Julius, "I'll take it in to the young gentlemen."

"Not to the young gentlemen, if you please. My object is to be admitted to a sight of Mr. Lumsden," said Julius, vexed at his hesitation,

"Sir, I've orders to say that *no one* can't, on no account, be admitted to see him."

"Take in this," said Julius, giving his card as the most comprehensible explanation.

"To Mr. Richard, sir?"

"No, no!—to Mr. Lumsden!"

"*To Mr. Lumsden?* Dearee me, sir, you said you *know'd!* But p'raps you come from the coroner?"—and, without allowing time to Julius for further explanations, he closed the door in his face.

Rightly conjecturing that the servant was taking in the card and would return with an answer, Julius waited in agitated perplexity on the steps; and when at length the door was reopened, as if for his admittance, he hesitatingly entered the house.

As he advanced, he saw a gentleman, apparently in a state of considerable excitement, holding open the door of the dining-room; to whom the footman seemed to point him out as the person in question between them. Julius immediately hastened to offer his apologies.

"I fear, sir, I am an intruder," said he, with a deprecating bow. "Urgent business with Mr. Lumsden, the delicate nature of which the name by which I have announced myself may perhaps explain."

"Yes—it *does* explain it!" interrupted the young man, hurrying towards him with a glowing face and threatening gestures. "And by what right, I ask you, do you cross the threshold of the man you have murdered? By what right would you insult the affliction of a family mourning over his remains?"

"You are under some mistake," said Julius, mildly putting aside the arm of his strange antagonist.

"No, sir! I am aware that I am addressing Mr. Egerton—the man of family—the man of fashion—who, having ruined this unfortunate family by his withering notice, now dares to"—

Again he was pressing towards Julius, who, unexasperated by an outrage of which he could so readily enter into the motives, hastened to set him right by the simplest explanation.

"I am not Lord Tiverton's son," said he. "Believe me, you are wholly in error. I am, in fact, deputed by my friend Mr. Vassyll to bear to the Lumsden family a message of kindness and conciliation."

The young man's hand trembled violently as he received from that of Julius a few lines addressed, in Vassyll's handwriting, to his father-in-law.

"This letter will never reach its destination," said he, in faltering accents. "You seem to be ignorant, sir, of the bereavement we have sustained; and which must apologize for a display of irritation, the motives of which ought to be easily conceivable to any friend of Mr. Vassyll. Pardon, sir, my ungraciousness. Pray be seated."

"I fear I must understand, from the expressions which have escaped you, that Mr. Lumsden is removed beyond reach of the afflictions which are falling on his family?" said Julius, with feeling. "I heard the name of coroner alluded to. I dread to inquire whether"—

"I understand you. No! *That* grievous aggravation we are spared. Mr. Lumsden, sir, received the sudden intelligence of his daughter's infamy yesterday, in an indignant letter from poor Vassyll, written in the first anguish of the discovery. He never spoke afterwards."

The countenance of Julius attested his sympathy.

"He had been ailing for some time," resumed the young man, comforted by the kindness of the stranger. "From the moment of the first intimation of this shameful connection put forth by the public prints, he never held up his head. The fine world, habituated to these disgraces, seems to have readily overlooked the business. But a father, sir, a father of Mr. Lumsden's plebeian principles and feelings—a vulgar merchant—a mere common-place honest man—could not so easily reconcile himself to the infamy of his child!"

"May I inquire whether I am addressing the son of Mr. Lumsden?" demanded Julius, eager to enter into some more

definite communication respecting the prospects and intentions of Mrs. Vassyll.

"No, sir, or I should not have fallen into the mistake I have still to regret. To Mr. Lumsden's son, the person of his sister's seducer is perfectly known; for, in the pursuit of vicious pleasures, the fine gentleman condescended to familiarity with every member of the family of his mistress. I am poor Lumsden's son-in-law. Three months ago, I wedded the sister of this profligate woman. I introduced my wife into the bosom of my own family (retired, unpretending people, to whom the very name of such offences is all but a fable), boasting that, though portionless, she was the daughter of a man of integrity, the child of an irreproachable family. As such, though portionless and without pecuniary prospects, she was warmly accepted by them. I have not seen my parents since this disgusting business transpired. I dread to go into the midst of my family, and reveal the truth and its consequences. My poor wife is with her mother—with her father's corpse;—and to-morrow the proceedings of a public inquest will spread in every quarter of the town the tidings of our distresses and their origin!"

A reluctant witness of the uncontrollable emotion of his exasperated companion, Julius Egerton strove to restore him to composure by the authority of words well fitted to his lips as a minister of the gospel; till young Hammond became at length calm enough to enter into the particulars of Mrs. Vassyll's present position. He avoided, indeed, all allusion to the conduct held towards her by Richard Egerton. It was enough to own that she was repentant; that she was willing to return home, and Vassyll to receive her.

"Then he is more forbearing than I should be in such a case!" exclaimed Hammond, with a contemptuous gesture. Were my wife to show herself under such circumstances at my door, fresh from the caresses of a libertine, and stained with the blood of her poor, old, greyheaded father"——

"God grant you may never be called upon to act in a crisis so afflicting!" interrupted Julius. "Mr. Vassyll is, happily, a lenient judge. Accustomed to weigh in the balance the actions and motives of other people, he is unwilling that one of his last actions upon earth should be an act of revenge."

"Then, for the love of mercy, sir, hasten the wretched woman back to his protection!" cried the young man, eagerly. "In *this* house, the very breathing of her name seems profanation. Let her not approach this door! Tell her only that she has killed her father—that before poor Lumsden reached the conclusion of her husband's letter, his features were set in death—that her mother is in a state of distraction—her sisters overwhelmed with shame and grief—that"——

"In the present state of Mrs. Vassyll's mind, such a communi-

cation might only add to the disastrous results of an event now irremediable!" mildly interrupted Julius. "I shall, on the contrary, hasten her departure from town, in the hope that nothing may reach her of the sad event dealing such immediate chastisement upon her fault, till she shall be re-installed under the same roof with her children—a mother's best consolation. Could I hope that *you* would adopt towards one still faltering in her return to the path of duty, a tone less likely to discourage the effort, I should leave London more at ease with regard to her future destinies."

"Expect no moderation from *me*!" cried the young man, accepting the proffered hand of Julius. "I owe no personal ill-will to Mrs. Vassyll—have never even seen her. Had she condescended to remain the associate of her family, I had never ventured to make Sophia Lumsden my wife; or *she* probably would have interfered to forbid an alliance with an obscure merchant—a vulgar city-man. As it is, I cannot refrain from cursing her name, which has connected a first feeling of bitterness with my happy marriage! Farewell, sir! Time may bring me to more charitable sentiments, even as it has already subdued me into offering my hand to a man bearing the name of Egerton."

As Julius passed through the hall, on quitting the house, escorted by Mr. Hammond, murmurs of lamentation reached them from the upper rooms.

"If you please, sir, Mrs. Richardson be arrived," said the servant, by way of explaining this mournful interruption to the solemn stillness of the house of death.

"Another of poor Lumsden's daughters, sent for from her happy country home to take leave of the remains of her unfortunate father!" said Hammond, addressing Julius in a lower voice. "If this unhappy woman, if this reckless libertine, could but have witnessed for a moment the anguish brought about by their levity!"

Julius did not venture a reply. Uncharitable as the inference might be, he feared that the lesson would have availed little with either of the offenders.

It was a relief to him to quit the house, the very atmosphere of which seemed to weigh upon his spirits like a sentence of condemnation. He was forced to stand for some minutes under the frosty sky, sparkling with myriads of stars, to relieve his spirits from their oppression.

During the two nights and a day which, even using the utmost speed, Mrs. Vassyll and Julius Egerton were forced to pass in each other's company, it was impossible for him not to notice with regret a total absence of the contrition and humility which the position of the returning fugitive might have been expected to call forth. Bitter disappointment, gloomy despair, seemed to deaden every holier impulse; and a convulsive grasp of his arm

she quitted the hotel which her paramour would re-enter only to hail the news of her departure, and a slight start as the travelling carriage rolled through Portland Place, the scene of her former glories, alone indicated that she experienced even a momentary emotion. On the latter occasion, indeed, an expression of levity escaped her lips, which almost wrung from those of Julius the avowal that, within a few hundred yards of the spot they were traversing, lay the remains of her poor broken-hearted father—wept over by her dishonoured family—watched by the unwearied eye of an avenging Providence !

To converse with her in her present frame of mind, while his own was still burthened with impressions of horror, was impossible. After travelling therefore all night in moody silence, he pleaded a headache at an early hour of the morning as an excuse for taking the servant's seat for the remainder of the journey ; nor was it till long after midnight he resumed his place by her side, in order, if possible, to recall her to a becoming sense of her position ere they approached West Hill. But Mrs. Vassyll, overcome by the fatigue of her two hurried journeys, was now too much worn out to reply to, or even understand, his admonitions. The remainder of their journey was performed in silence ; and, on arriving at her husband's door, he was forced to lift her from the carriage, and bear her in his arms to the charge of her attendants, who fortunately attributed to intense emotion a state of suffering purely physical.

"I did not expect you back so soon. I did not fancy she would have strength for such immediate exertion," said Mr. Vassyll, who rose in haste, and hurried to Julius with faltering steps and haggard countenance. "In a few hours I was to have quitted West Hill for Scotland. I did not intend that you should find me here."

"It is best as it is," replied Egerton, noting with dismay the withering effect which a few days of intense affliction had produced in the altered countenance of Vassyll. "I bring back to your mercy one who has no friend on earth but *you*. God has taken her father to himself. He for whose sake she fell, despises her—her family reject her—the world disdains. No human being will compassionate this erring and now suffering woman, unless it be the father of her children !"

"Lumsden dead ? My venerated friend hurried from the world by this shame to his old age ?" cried Vassyll, clasping his hands in dismay. And immediately the harsh terms in which, in the anguish of the first discovery, he had communicated to Anna's father the tidings of her disgrace, recurred to his mind. "I should have been more guarded ! I ought to have taken pity on his grey hairs !" murmured Vassyll. "The shock destroyed him—that fatal letter destroyed him !" And Julius Egerton, perceiving the gradual relenting of his mood, seized the opportunity to propose that he should address a few lines to his wife, to greet her upon

her waking—bidding her be welcome under his roof, if not as the wife of his bosom, as an inmate whose arrival was not unexpected or importunate.

Having discharged this last office of humanity, poor Julius, wearied in body and mind, was glad to accept Mr. Vassyll's offer of his carriage to convey him back to the Castle. The period of his absence appeared so long to him, that he felt it indispensable to lose no time in relieving the suspense of Lord Tiverton's family.

All that he had to communicate was satisfactory. The object of his journey was accomplished. Mrs. Vassyll had been so speedily replaced under her husband's roof as almost to set at nought the rumours of the county touching her disappearance; and as he had left a letter in London for Dick Egerton, suggesting such excuses for his absence from the wedding ceremony of Lady Ismena as could not fail to be accepted, there was no fear that the piety or pride of the Duchess of Dumbarton would be wounded by the suspicion of allying herself with one exposed to obloquy by a recent outrage against the laws of God and man.

By his exertions, and the success with which they were crowned, he had consequently earned the gratitude of his uncle; and no circumstance, perhaps, could have been more auspicious to the personal disclosure, the period for which was now arrived, than the guilty madness of the woman he had just aided to restore to her place in society. Yet, notwithstanding all this, Julius returned, dissatisfied with himself, and every way ill at ease. His mind was harassed with reflections upon the importance of the act in which he had taken a part—of the measures he had suggested. By his arguments and influence, he had persuaded a man of honour to receive back into his arms a woman whose infamy had disgraced him—a woman, not only impenitent, but scarcely ashamed of her guilt. To what further depths of evil might not one thus corrupted precipitate herself and all belonging to her? To what further shame might she not betray the generous husband, whom he had recklessly persuaded into leniency?

In addition to the trouble of mind arising from the consciousness of having incurred this heavy moral responsibility, Julius had other sources of anxiety. Expressions had fallen from the lips of Mrs. Vassyll in the course of their journey, relative to the Tiverton family, which filled him with perplexity. She had spoken of Lady Henrietta *as engaged*, engaged with the full approbation of her parents; she had spoken of Lady Henrietta's marriage as deferred only till she should fully attain her eighteenth year; and consequently to follow in a few months the splendid alliance of the Duchess of Dumbarton.

The first impulse of Julius was unhesitatingly to deny the truth of the whole statement; but the peculiar smile with which Mrs. Vassyll pleaded information from the fountain-head, intelligence

afforded by the Countess herself, and confirmed by her two daughters, silenced his assertions.

"Had Lady Tiverton also communicated the name of the bridegroom?" was his next inquiry; and his companion was forced to admit that upon *that* point the family preserved the strictest silence.

Julius felt as if suddenly awakened from a dream. Henrietta engaged? Henrietta about to become a wife? his companion, friend, mistress, his all but own Henrietta? whom all the guests at the Castle—whom father, mother, sister, kinsfolk, had seen bestow upon himself such unequivocal marks of preference, and seen it without interference or disapproval!

A sudden hope darted into his mind! What if his uncle, unknown to himself, and with the connivance of his beloved Henrietta, should have planned their union, and reserved the announcement as a happy surprise to his nephew? The family might have discerned his hesitation, approved the delicacy of his conduct, and refrained from bringing the matter to an immediate issue only from a generous disinclination to mortify his feelings, by placing his poor pretensions in contrast with the opulence of the Duke of Dumbarton!

The blood thrilled in his veins as he anticipated such a glorious termination to all his hopes and fears, his anxious days and sleepless nights. Henrietta his wife—the gentle, tender, undesigning, artless Henrietta! The pure and simple girl, reared among scenes of corruption, as by the caprice of the great we sometimes see a field-flower or mountain-plant nurtured among their gorgeous conservatories or gay parterres. It was too much for his reason—too much for his imagination; and his very heart drooped under the oppression of such prospects of joy!

Even after his interview with the unfortunate husband at West Hill, his anxieties on Vassyll's account were tempered by the satisfaction of being able to meet his kind uncle with such welcome intelligence as the fruition of his schemes; the news that Mrs. Vassyll was safe under her husband's roof, and Dick Egerton secure from legal retribution.

Elate with all these encouraging surmises did Julius approach Tiverton Castle; and who shall say with what emotion he caught sight of its well-known turrets! His heart beat within his weary bosom till his agitation was almost too great for endurance, as he reflected upon the happiness that might await him under the roof inhabited by the object of his unspeakable attachment.

It was near the usual family breakfast hour when the carriage set him down in the exterior quadrangle of the Castle; and it struck him as he walked round by the offices, in order to secure an interview with the Earl before his arrival was generally known, that an unusual stir was apparent in the establishment.

Several travelling carriages were drawn out, with a proportionate number of under coachmen and grooms, looking on with their arms crossed, while the helpers with their's bared to the shoulder, and mops or chamois leathers in hand, were busy with their work. A smith was fussily employed with the patent boxes of the wheels of Lord Egerton's *dormeuse*. All was in confusion.

Without pausing to question the subordinates, whose domestic intelligence is usually of a doubtful nature, Julius pressed forward, entered the house, and presented himself in his uncle's dressing-room.

"All is well!" was the abrupt but comprehensive salutation with which he greeted the Earl. "Mrs. Vassyll is once more installed under the protection of her husband at West Hill."

"The deuce she is!" was Lord Tiverton's undignified reply. "Then poor Dick's hands are clear again—though I don't know that it much signifies *now*. All is blown, you know, with the Dumbartons—all's up with poor Ismena! Confound the hypocritical old woman! I'll take my oath she was only waiting for a pretext to break off the match. If the worst had come to the worst, what the devil could it signify to the Duke of Dumbarton that his wife's brother was figuring in a crim. con. affair, which began before he was so much as acquainted with the family? No, no! the pretext was all humbug."

"And yet, with the Duchess of Dumbarton's rigid principles" — Julius was beginning.

"Curse her principles!" interrupted Lord Tiverton, exasperated out of his usual sense of propriety. "In my opinion, her conduct was a tissue of duplicity; pretending, so long as she remained in the house, that it was only a *delay* of the marriage she contemplated, leaving the final rupture to be disclosed by her lawyers, as soon as her precious son, whom she carried off in triumph, should have cleared the Castle."

"And was the Vassyll affair the ostensible motive of her grace's conduct?" demanded Julius, with an air of concern.

"The scandal of such an exposure at the moment of the wedding was all she could adduce. But the truth is, she took exception at all she heard and saw at Tiverton Castle."

"A proof how indispensable it was that the business should be fully explained to the Dumbartons previous to the marriage," Julius replied.

"Explained? You don't suppose I was such an ass as to enter into explanations with them?" cried the Earl, in a fury. "It all transpired through the gossiping of servants, or, I verily believe, through the eavesdropping of that spying old rascal, Macnab! Only let him shew his face again at Tiverton Castle—that's all!"

"But surely, my lord," pleaded Julius, who had never before seen his uncle goaded out of his habits of sullen but decorous taciturnity—"surely, since the Duchess of Dumbarton was watching

for an occasion to break off the match it was far better for Lady Ismena's future prospects of happiness, that"—

"The young Duke and his mother couched their pretences in such damned respectful terms," cried the Earl, not thinking it necessary to give a moment's attention to his nephew's preaching, "that it was scarcely possible for Egerton to take notice in a hostile way of their declaring off, as Lady Tiverton wished. At first, she would hear of nothing less than that the Duke should be called out by one of her sons. But the old hag of a Dowager had taken the whole onus upon herself, by declaring in her letter that she had not only threatened Dumbarton with her malediction, but was prepared to retain arbitrary possession of the family property in the event of his persisting in an alliance which a nearer acquaintance with the family convinced her would be disadvantageous to his prospects here and hereafter;—so that it would have been absurd to visit the offence upon the poor lad, who was wretched at the line of conduct imposed upon him by his mother and her pet parson. I had some difficulty in persuading Lady Tiverton of this. But luckily my brother Adolphus, with his coolness and knowledge of the world, was at hand to remind her that an *esclandre* would be fatal to Ismena's hopes of any future establishment; and that our only chance was to represent the failure into her own act and deed. Dol has written to town to secure the papers, and place the thing in a proper light at the clubs; and as every human being belonging to our set detests the old Duchess as a rank methodist, they will readily believe that sacrifices were exacted of my daughter which determined her to break off the match."

"But surely the Dumbartons, if provoked by misrepresentation, will give the correct version of the affair?" said Julius, amazed at the unblushing disingenuousness of his uncle.

"No—they don't seem to care for any thing but to secure the rupture of the match. The Duchess begs we will put what colour we please upon it in the eyes of the world."

"Then her grace is less vainglorious than I had done her the injustice to suppose;" thought Julius, while his uncle proceeded to describe, with some bitterness, the confusion, trouble, and expense incident upon this untimely conclusion of Lady Ismena's expectations.

"Lady Tiverton is almost frantic," said he, "and Ismy half out of her mind; and all, you know, thanks to their imprudent notice of those damned people at West Hill. The Dean was here all yesterday afternoon, trying to prose them into some degree of composure, after the Duchess's ultimatum arrived. He made it clear that there was no appeal against the old woman's decree. She is able to prolong her guardianship over her son for five mortal years to come; and, long before the expiration of that time, he will have been snapped up at a mouthful by one of the saints

of her grace's calendar ! So, the case being irremediable, they see that their only chance is to resign themselves with a good grace."

"It is fortunate that the influence of the Dean has so far prevailed," replied Julius, gravely.

"Ay, as far as it goes. He was unluckily called away to Darlington by business, and I thought we should have had all the hysterics over again after his departure. But when Dol and Egerton came home from shooting, *they* hit upon a suggestion that ensured an immediate restoration of family peace—a winter in Paris—a thing which the girls have been struggling for the last two years."

"A winter in Paris?" reiterated Julius, aghast.

"Change of scene will tend more than any thing else to obliterate unpleasant impressions from their own feelings," resumed the Earl ; "and, above all, it will take us thoroughly out of the way of the disagreeable reports likely to arise from this abominable business."

"Out of the way of *hearing* them," interposed Julius, in some agitation.

"Between the two affairs—the cursed West Hill nuisance, and the rupture of the marriage, Lady Tiverton and her daughters could scarcely have appeared in society at present, either in London or here," resumed the Earl. "In Paris, they will be among new people, to whom our vexations are unknown. The mere prospect of the journey has sufficed to raise their spirits ; and already, I assure you, the girls are beginning to form projects for the amusement of their winter campaign. Ismena is almost herself again."

"And Lady Henrietta?" demanded Julius, in a faltering voice, turning as pale as death.

"Oh ! Henrietta likes the thoughts of the move quite as much as her mother and sister ; it makes no difference to *her* you know, or rather it will be far pleasanter than moping herself to death here, till the period of her marriage. *She* has nothing to fear from the discovery of her brother Dick's peccadillos ! Buchanan, God knows, is not the man to declare off from a match on which he has set his heart, in a fit of hyper-refined morality."

"Buchanan?" reiterated Julius, in a still fainter voice.

"Whether the wedding take place in England or on the Continent, signifies very little to either of them," continued Lord Tiverton ; who, having been employed in his toilet during the whole time of his interview with his nephew, was now carefully unscrewing his silver tooth-powder box, previous to brushing his teeth.

"When Lady Tiverton accepted Buchanan's proposals for Henrietta last spring," he resumed, dipping his brush into the box, "she made it an express condition that the marriage should not take place for a year, and that the young people should not meet again till next spring. The poor girl's extreme youth and delicacy of health afforded a plea for this arrangement ; but, be-

tween ourselves, we were not sorry to allow a chance for Lord Orrington's death in the interim (the Irish earl, you know, to whose title and estates Buchanan is to succeed); for his uncle's inheritance will entitle us to demand more liberal settlements for Henrietta than the present state of Sir Henry's rent-roll. But what's the matter? you look as pale as—I'm afraid you've waited for your breakfast? Go down, my dear boy, and if they are not ready, take a slice of ham, or *foie gras*, and a glass of sherry, or something of that sort, in the dining-room, till we all assemble."

Julius attempted no reply, but staggered towards the door.

"By the way, pray don't let our sudden departure from the Castle be any annoyance to you, my dear fellow," continued Lord Tiverton, in an embarrassed manner, as his nephew was leaving the room. "I shall leave orders for every thing to be done to make things as comfortable as when we are here, till your parsonage is furnished; and *now*, you know, you'll have plenty of leisure to overlook the workmen, and push forward. The sooner we get away from this place the better! Lady Tiverton means to sleep to-night, if possible, at Greta Bridge. We shall only stay half a day in town, so if you have any thing to write about you had better direct to 'The Ship, Dover.' I'm devilish sorry, Julius, you should have had the trouble of this plaguy journey; and still more so, that the blow-up should have occurred during your first winter in the north. But the woodcocks will be here soon, when you will have famous sport. There is always plenty of winter society in the county; and you are a great favourite, I assure you, with the Waltons and Davises, to say nothing of the people at West Hill."

Julius was already out of hearing of his uncle's exhortations. Before Lord Tiverton had finished brushing his teeth, his nephew escaped unobserved, and was lying on the sofa of his own apartment, with his burning temples pressed into the cushion, as if to shut out all consciousness of life. His heart beat so throbbingly, his mind was so bewildered with faintness, that he could not yet fairly contemplate the incidents crowding upon his fortitude. Could this be true? Had Henrietta thus deceived him, or was it possible that, in all that had occurred, he had so utterly deceived himself?

In a few hours the family were to quit the Castle. So short a space alone remained for explanation, for redress; and yet, overpowered as he was, he seemed to have lost all energy for the attempt.

The first thing that struck him when he found strength to rise, was an accumulation of papers on his table; and among them a letter with black edges, the Hurley post-mark, his mother's handwriting!

"Great God! is nothing to be spared me!" cried he aloud,

scarcely daring to break the seal, as he reflected on his sister's precarious health, and the shock that might have arisen on learning the report of Richard Egerton's recent misconduct. "Is this last worst agony to be added to all the rest!" And his eyes became so obscured by tears, that he had some difficulty in deciphering the following lines, inscribed in the tremulous handwriting of his mother:—

"I feel the utmost reluctance to communicate to you the sad bereavement we have experienced, my dear Julius," wrote poor Mrs. Egerton; "for though I cannot go the lengths in which my sister indulges, of inveighing against you as the cause of the mournful event, I am convinced you will indulge in heavy self-accusations. My poor father is no more. He breathed his last on the 18th instant, at the advanced age of 92; but as his faculties were unimpaired, with the exception of his sight, hearing, and memory, there was no reason that he might not have survived for many years to come, to be a continued blessing to all concerned in his welfare.

"It is undeniable that your quitting Helstone precipitated his end. And such I fear is the view of the case presented by your aunt Rachel, in her letter to my late father's pupil, the Duke, soliciting the gift of the living of Helstone for his curate, Mr. Harrington; a petition that was most condescendingly granted by an autograph letter from his grace, in which he makes some sort of mysterious allusion to an obligation to *you*, regarding some matter of health, which makes it doubly agreeable, he says, to favour the wishes of any member of your family.

"The state of my spirits must prevent my saying more at present than that we are well here. We have comfortable letters from your brother at Valparaiso, who has received his appointment as master and commander; and from John, who seems to have quite got over his disappointment about Georgy Heseltine, for he is making up to another young lady. Your sister, who has been long ailing, is somewhat better. And now, wishing you the compliments of the season, and hoping you are enjoying a merry Christmas at Tiverton Castle—I am, my dear boy, your affectionate mother,

"O. EGERTON."

Relieved from his momentary panic, Julius was not enough himself to feel that there was comfort in this letter, or even to reflect that he might now have been in undisturbed enjoyment of the living of Helstone—dear, green, secluded, peaceful Helstone—where he was loved and respected. All he cared for at the present moment was to obtain an interview with Lady Henrietta—ascertain from her own lips whether she were deceiving or deceived;—if she avowed herself averse to this sudden expatriation, snatch

her from the tyranny of her family ; or, if prepared to follow them unresisting to the pleasures of Paris and the arms of Sir Henry Buchanan, resign *himself* to all the wretchedness of despair !

But the remarks hazarded by the family monitor, the Dean of Darlington, during his absence, upon the intimacy of the cousins, had probably drawn Lady Tiverton's attention to her daughter's indiscreet encouragement of the assiduities of William Egerton's son ; for he found it impossible to obtain access to Lady Henrietta ; and the Countess and Ismena were so fiercely out of humour, that he had scarcely courage to accost them. Servants were stumbling along the passages with imperials and chaise-seats—the house-steward was closeted with the Earl—the old housekeeper taking orders from my lady—and Garafarasti weeping over the ruins of his temple of Hymen ; while the valets-de-chambre swore at the laundry-maids for their tardiness in bringing the linen to be packed up ; and the lady's-maids could scarcely subdue to decorum their delight at the prospect of quitting the Castle on a "tower."

With burning eyeballs, and every pulse vibrating with feverish impatience, Julius gazed wildly upon the confusion worse confounded of the house. At length, the cracking of whips added to the tumult, apprized him that half-a-dozen pair of post-horses were entering the court-yard, that in half an hour all would be over !

He rushed into the dining-room. Nobody was there but Lord Egerton and his uncle Adolphus, preparing themselves, by a hot cutlet and glass of hock, to dispense with burnt mutton-chops and burning sherry upon the road. Without venturing to interrupt their solemn silence, he hurried off to the library, at the risk of oversetting Lord Tiverton's steward, who was bowing his exit as Julius entered.

Seated beside a table on which stood a Russia-leather despatch-box, the Earl was contemplating, with complacent countenance, the piles of bank-notes he had just been extorting from his man of business, in case his balance with his London bankers should not present an aspect favourable to a continental tour. He looked up as Julius entered ; but, instead of noticing the disordered appearance of his nephew, proceeded coolly to place the notes in a pocket-book, and lock the pocket-book into his cash-box, his lips moving the while, as if continuing his mental calculations.

But before the key had turned in the lock, Julius was in the midst of an incoherent exposure of his wrongs—accusing, with all the vehemence of a man bereft of reason, Lady Henrietta Egerton, her family, the whole world ; for all appeared to have been in a conspiracy to deceive his affections and drive him to distraction.

"What on earth is all this ?" cried the astonished Lord Tiverton, coolly buckling down his cash-box into its travelling case of Russia-leather. "Compose yourself, sir. Be seated ; and refrain a moment until I have summoned my daughters and Lady Tiver-

ton. You are somewhat general and somewhat tardy in your accusations. But it is not too late to meet them as they deserve. You shall have justice. The affair shall be inquired into."

Lady Tiverton and her daughters were already accoutred to step into the carriage; and Lady Ismena and her mother felt not a little indignant at being interrupted by the summons of the Earl, in the midst of their last agonies of having proper addresses nailed upon the packing-cases containing the fatal *trousseau*, which were to be despatched by the wagon to meet them at Dover, with a view to the conquests of the Paris season. They entered the library, accordingly, with perturbed brows and ungracious demeanour. But Lady Henrietta made *her* appearance wearing her usual smile of listless serenity; and, unaware of the scene and explanation that had just taken place, walked straight to her cousin with her hand extended in kindly greeting, inquiring affectionately after his health, and expressing a hope that his two hurried journeys had not proved too fatiguing.

"It is so very unlucky," said she, "that we should be fated to absent ourselves from the Castle the first winter of your being here! I looked forward to our having such charming skating parties after Christmas—and Egerton had half promised to send us down his sledge. However, with *your* pursuits, my dear cousin, you will never want occupation or amusement. You must write to us at Paris, and let us know how Burthwaite is getting on—though I suppose the workmen will be able to do little or nothing during the frosty weather? Mamma!" continued the young lady, with *naïf* unconcern, "must not Julius write to us at Paris, and tell us all the news of Tiverton?"

"Certainly, if he has nothing better to do," replied the Countess, who was hunting in her black velvet travelling *cabas* for a missing scent-bottle.

"By the time we return next year, we shall find you settled at the Parsonage," resumed Lady Henrietta with a smile. "You will have had plenty of time to make yourself comfortable. Supposing you commission us to bring you home a little, foreign wife?"

"Are you answered, sir?" sneeringly demanded Lord Tiverton, to whom Julius had so recently hinted that he was master of the affections of Lady Henrietta. "You asked me by what right I risked my daughter's happiness by removing her from your presence—by uniting her with another. I reply, because such is her desire, in accordance with the wishes of her whole family; and because her regard for yourself is the mere good-will extended to all her family connections." Then turning towards Lady Tiverton, while his nephew stood transfixed in moody despair, he briefly narrated the presumptuous expectations cherished by the unfortunate young man.

"William Egerton's son presume to raise pretensions to the hand of one of my daughters?" exclaimed the Countess, scarcely

aside. "But yesterday a poor curate, maintained by the liberality of a schoolmaster—your uncle's tutor—and fancy himself a fitting match for Lady Henrietta Egerton?"

"For me?" reiterated Henrietta, with a smile, advancing a few paces in utter astonishment. "My dear mamma, you must be dreaming! Believe me, such an absurd idea never entered my cousin's head. He would have thought of such a thing as little as I should myself. Julius, I entreat you to explain!"

She paused! On turning towards her cousin for confirmation of her assurances, something in the ghastliness of his countenance—the stern immobility of his features—awed her to silence. She saw that he was not to be trifled with. She saw that all which had been sport to *her*, was death to the broken-hearted man before her!

Devoid of sensibility in her own person, Lady Henrietta had not suspected its high-wrought nature in that of Julius. Introduced into their circle in St. James's Square soon after the formation of her engagement with Sir Henry Buchanan—an engagement to which her listless nature had subscribed without repugnance, as likely to secure her from the mortifications attending the career of her elder sister—she had supposed the secret just then ascendant in her mind to have been revealed by her father to her two cousins. On the arrival of Julius at the Castle, she fancied he was devoting his attentions to her as an agreeable friend—a safe person to flirt with—she being the only engaged young lady of the party; and if, in the course of their intimacy, she had found him advance somewhat beyond the boundary of mere flirtation, she considered that, poor fellow, being debarred by his subordinate situation in life from forming engagements like other people, it was but natural that his romantic sentiments should occasionally run away with him, in directions where, but for her good-natured forbearance, they must have led him into mischief. Lady Henrietta did not, however, think it necessary on that account to retreat from her intimacy with an agreeable, handsome, intelligent young man; whose society enabled her to get through the autumn with less than her usual share of *ennui*, during the absence of Buchanan, who was in Ireland in attendance upon his dying uncle.

Now that the sudden break-up of the family had brought to light the earnest nature of his sentiments towards her, she felt sorry to have been the means of exciting so unfortunate an attachment. She knew that the carriages were at the door to convey her from his sight. She knew that her mother and sister would resent with scorn any weakness of sensibility she might betray in taking leave of the presumptuous offender. But on perceiving that they had quitted the room, and were giving directions in the hall concerning the placing of Lady Tiverton's lap-dog in the front seat of the carriage, she again extended her hand towards

Julius with a half-hesitating, "Believe me, I am very sorry"—much in the same unmeaning tone as if apologizing to a stranger for treading on his toe. But she did not proceed. The agonized expression of his countenance warned her to forbear; and had not the servants at that moment entered the room to announce that all was ready and Lady Tiverton waiting for her, the anguish of Julius Egerton might have burst forth in terms of reproach, calculated to awaken feelings of deep and lasting remorse in the bosom of the heartless coquette.

"I can only excuse your conduct, sir, by supposing you to have been suffering under mental hallucinations," said Lord Tiverton, advancing in his turn towards his nephew, while Lady Henrietta hurried out of the room. "But let me hear no more, Julius, of this nonsense; and I shall be willing to forget that any thing of the kind ever passed between us. Good morning! When you come to your senses, let me hear from you. The Dean will be back from Darlington to-morrow, and I refer you to *him* for further advice."

The rumble of wheels at length roused the stupefied Julius to the consciousness that there were carriages rolling out of the court-yard; and that he was standing alone in the deserted library, with two cold tears upon his cheeks, and the bitter ashes of extinguished hope scattered over his future existence.

CHAPTER XI.

PATCHED UP AGAIN.

THE presence of William Egerton at Tiverton Castle, when left behind ten years before by his brother, the newly inheriting Earl, was not voted more importunate by the menials of the house, than that of his son after the departure of the family for the Continent. According to the calculations of the housekeeper's room, six months' leisure, six months' enjoyment, were to repay the labours of their recent life; and it was hard indeed that they were prevented throwing up their hats, and shouting the expression of their glee, on seeing the travelling carriages wind along the valley towards town, merely because one of my lord's poor relations found it convenient to make a lodging-house of the Castle during his absence.

There was nothing for it, however, but submission. Lord Tiverton had issued his commands to steward and housekeeper; "every thing was to be done for Mr. Egerton's comfort—every thing for his accommodation." The Dean of Darlington was to hold the sceptre of authority during the absence of the Earl. To *him* were to be submitted all questions of domestic legislation. As delegate of

Lord Tiverton, he was to enjoy the venison and pine-apples, and determine to whom should be accorded the liberty of shooting over the estate, or copying the pictures in the gallery. But Julius Egerton, though a cipher, was to be a cipher of some value.

A table was to be kept for him ; and, till his removal to Burthwaite Rectory, the servants were enjoined to treat him with the care and consideration due to a member of the family. What private orders the Earl might see fit to issue to his steward in their parting interview, concerning the completion of the Parsonage, with a view to hasten his "removal," did not transpire to the multitude.

Nevertheless, when Mrs. Logan, the housekeeper, communicated to Mrs. Smith, the upper housemaid, her sense of injury and annoyance, that "a person should have been left by way of spy upon their proceedings, who would give them no end of trouble and *andziety*," she had very little notion of the amount of either which the unfortunate Julius was preparing for her. Within four-and-twenty hours after Lord Tiverton's departure, a messenger was despatched by Mesdames Logan and Co. to Wyndham Rectory, begging the Dean would lose no time in hastening to the Castle, for that "young Mr. Egerton was in a very bad way ; in a 'igh fever and delirious."

"Send over immediately to Penrith for Dr. Singsmall," said the Dean, who, when the message reached the Rectory, was seated comfortably over his dinner, with his second course, including a hen-pheasant in prospect, "*I* could be of no use under such circumstances. Better send at once for Singsmall."

Singsmall was accordingly summoned, and obeyed the summons ; but so serious did he consider the case, as to call at Wyndham on his way home, in order to apprise the Dean of the precarious condition of the kinsman of his noble patron.

The doctor averred, with a professional shake of the head, that he hardly knew what to make of it ; and the Dean (whose inward response of "most likely a capital job !" was not surmised by his medical neighbour), satisfied with recommending to Dr. Singsmall the most assiduous attention to the invalid, and a further report on the morrow, prepared himself to divide his luxurious evening between his cosy tea-table and a new number of the *Edinburgh Review*.

Surprised at finding a person thus indifferent concerning the life or death of Lord Tiverton's nephew, whom he had occasionally seen convulsed with alarm concerning the health of Lady Tiverton's lap-dog, the Doctor judged it necessary to speak out ; owning that he considered young Egerton's life in imminent danger—"the attack of fever being of almost unexampled violence."

"Nothing infectious, I hope !" cried the Dean with a face of real anxiety.

"On the contrary—a cerebral affection ; produced, as I am given

to understand by Mrs. Logan, by two hurried journeys within a few days' space ; and the emotion consequent upon an unexpected separation from Lord Tiverton and his family."

The Dean smiled aside at the notion of any one experiencing emotion on bidding adieu to Lord Tiverton or his family. But finding from the Doctor's account that young Egerton's disorder was really of a critical kind, he promised to proceed to the Castle at an early hour of the morning—observing to his helpmate when Singsmall quitted the house, that "it would be a pretty thing if he were expected to officiate as dry nurse to Lord Tiverton's nephew during the absence of the family !"

But when, the following day, he entered the room of the invalid, who was struggling in the arms of two attendants in all the frenzy of delirium, the Dean stood abashed with consternation. Julius was habitually so mild in his address—so reserved in his manners—that this sudden outburst of the physical energies of his powerful nature, seemed doubly appalling. Giving way to wild extremes of joy and despair, the raving sufferer now burst into a frantic song—now threatened and murmured with frightful imprecations. A second doctor was already sent for from Carlisle ; but so desponding were Singsmall's prognostications, that the Dean of Darlington judged it necessary to despatch a letter to Hurley House, requiring the immediate attendance of some member of the family. Five days must necessarily elapse before any answer could arrive. According to the hints of the physicians, it was most likely that young Egerton's relations would make their appearance only time enough to lay him in the grave. Still, the Dean knew too much of the cost of expresses, and the value of money to the younger brother of an embarrassed Earl, to hazard without authority a more rapid mode of communication. Old Egerton might, perhaps, find it as great a nuisance to book up for speedier intelligence of his son's danger, as the Dean to pay two gratuitous visits per diem to the Castle, to learn whether the dying man were yet alive.

Whether communicated per post or per courier, tidings of this grievous family affliction were sure to bring despair to Hurley House. Mrs. Egerton would fain have started off with her husband to the north, to share his attendance upon the beloved sufferer ; but poor Livy had not yet recovered the shock of witnessing the death of her old father, whom apparently she had considered immortal ; and her family succeeded in dissuading her from the attempt. She was assured that Mary was still delicate—that Mary stood in need of her mother's care ; and finally consented that her anxious husband should depart alone.

Yet, had she conjectured how restless were to be the hours of poor William's journey, the good wife had not been persuaded to remain at home. Though travelling in the mail, with all the speed which the responsibility of public conveyances ensures, Egerton

found the tediousness of the last hundred miles of his journey scarcely to be endured. The Dean's hurried letter had yielded such vague information and so little insight into the real state of the case, that he scarcely understood whether his son's malady were the result of accident or a paroxysm of insanity. Accustomed, perhaps, to estimate William Egerton according to the disregard with which he was treated by his brother, Dr. Nicewig had not even found time to announce the departure of Lord Tiverton's family from the Castle ; and William comforted himself with the belief that his boy, his darling son, was surrounded by the attendance of the affectionate family which had so strongly marked its appreciation of his merits ; and which, in the midst of the gay preparations for the ensuing bridal, must so deeply deplore the interruption produced by the peril of their young kinsman. Still, terror was predominant in his mind.

Arrived at the Castle, his agitation scarcely admitted of his reaching the sick chamber. For the last few months, he had made it his delight to picture to himself his gifted son installed under the roof of his forefathers—brilliant—prosperous—happy—admired as he deserved—cherished as he deserved ; and now, to find him there alone—alone in that vast mansion—deserted—abandoned—dying ; estranged from all his friends—surrounded by menials ! The shock was almost too much for the confiding father.

The physicians judged it necessary to communicate hopes which they did not entertain, on witnessing the anguish which overwhelmed poor William's mind as he stood by the bedside of the unconscious sufferer, from whose parched and blackened lips there now escaped only unintelligible mutterings. They spoke of youth triumphing over the violence of disease, with all the plausibility that professional voices can so readily assume ; and the candid, credulous Egerton began to trust that all was not irremediably lost.

The Dean, apprized of the arrival of Lord Tiverton's brother, hastened to fulfil the duty prescribed by decorum, of waiting upon the new guest (for in the house of his fathers William Egerton was only a guest) ; and entered the room with a face sufficiently elongated to make up for the length in which it had been deficient during the earlier stages of the malady. His first task was to pacify poor William's ejaculations of indignation, that his brother should have quitted the Castle, leaving his son in such a state.

"Mr. Julius Egerton was, I can assure you, in perfect health," explained the Dean, "when Lord Tiverton took his departure for town."

"Impossible, impossible !" cried the distracted father. "The doctors here inform me that my poor boy is now in the eighth day of his fever ; and Tiverton, you say, has been just a week absent."

"I entreat you to believe, my dear sir," said the polite Dean in his most insinuating tones, "that nothing could be more sudden

than this unfortunate attack. The very first symptoms manifested themselves within a few hours after the family had quitted the Castle."

"Then the two circumstances must be in some way connected!" cried William, with suddenly wakening perception. "There must have been some misunderstanding between poor Ju and his uncle!"

"On the contrary, they were on terms of the most affectionate mutual regard. Only the day previous to Lord Tiverton's departure, I heard him speak of your son in the kindest and most flattering manner. Nothing, my dear sir, could exceed his lordship's anxiety for his nephew's return from town."

"From town? Julius *in town*?" cried William Egerton, aghast. "In town—yet not find time to run down and see us at Hurley?"

"He returned on the very morning of the departure of the family," mildly interposed the Dean; "and was probably in some haste for an interview with the Earl."

"There is some strange mystery in all this!" cried poor William, perplexed by a thousand conjectures. "What could possibly take my son to London at this season of the year, without a word of intimation to his family?"

"It is not always easy to account for the conduct or motives of young men of his age," observed Nicewig, not choosing to avow to the excited William that the fine young man, dying in the adjoining room, was probably indebted for his illness to the fatigue of two hurried journeys in severe weather, under the pressure of family anxieties of the most distressing nature.

"Perhaps his uncle was displeased with him for quitting his duties for this mad expedition?" persisted William Egerton.

"I rather think not—I fancy they parted excellent friends," observed the Dean. "I was absent at the moment of his lordship's departure; but I am advised by the upper servants, that strict injunctions were left with them, that Mr. Julius Egerton should receive all the respect and attention due to Lord Tiverton's own son."

Poor William shrugged his shoulders, and looked care-crazed. He did not know what to make of it at all!—he even ventured to ask the Dean (in friendly confidence) what origin *he* ascribed to the strange journey and strange seizure of his poor boy; when the Dean replied (in friendly confidence), shrugging *his* shoulders, and trying to look nearly as distressed as the worthy gentleman appealing to his sympathy—that "a—a—a, young men would be young men—a—a—a, that Mr. Julius Egerton was a remarkably fine young man—a—a—a, that he had of late been introduced into society a little gayer perhaps than any to which he had been previously accustomed—a—a—a, that the style of living at Tiverton Castle was of a more exciting nature probably than accorded with the moderate habits of his early life—a—a—a, that a *very* little excess in persons of abstemious habits was calculated to produce feverish disorder—a—a—a"——

"You don't mean to say that Julius, who was always temperate to a proverb, has become a libertine and a sot?" cried William Egerton, almost distracted by such an accusation.

"Far from it, my dear sir—far from it!" modified the Dean. "But his medical attendants judge, from the nature of his attack, that he may have been living too high. I cannot say," continued the Dean, with an air of solemn suavity, "that I ever saw him unbecomingly excited. Such is not the tone of this house—such is not the failing of the present day. Moreover, it is impossible to guess," continued he, satisfied that Julius would never arise from his bed of sickness to contradict whatever assertions he might choose to hazard—"it is really impossible to guess what secret anxieties may have been hanging upon this poor young man's mind. Between ourselves, my dear Mr. Egerton, I have understood that at College he led a very turbulent life, a circumstance by no means at variance with the excessive strictness of his professional career. Between ourselves, I have even heard that, on leaving Cambridge, he was embarrassed to some amount. Between ourselves"—

But Egerton had heard enough. Without waiting till the last particle of his poor boy's respectability was hinted away, he hurried back to his sick-bed, to watch over the progress of a malady now beyond the control of art, and to pray, with all the fervency of his blameless soul, to Him who is greater to save than the mere devisings of mortal skill—to Him at whose bidding the stormy waves are still, and animation is renewed in the stagnant veins of the dying—that He would preserve, for the sake of those who loved him, and his own future repentance and perfecting, the young man in whom so many hearts delighted!

It was a dreadful trial to poor William to look upon the disfigured countenance of his son, and without a friend at hand to whom to turn for a word of comfort. His cordial habits of life so much accustomed him to kindness! He wanted his gentle Mary to press his trembling hand in hers; he wanted his trusty wife to whisper to him, "Submit like a man, submit like a Christian! The young man thy son shall not surely die; or if indeed the decree go forth, rebel not against the chastening hand of God; but rather be thankful that it leaveth thee so many and such great blessings!"

But William Egerton looked in vain for such gentle comforting. The doctors went and came, and pronounced that it was almost needless they should come again, so completely had the disease gained the ascendancy. The housekeeper fussed in and out, begging Mr. Egerton would "take something," assuring him *he* would fall ill too, "unless he kept himself up;" and begging to know "at what o'clock he would be pleased to dine?" As if the excitement of his cares did not enable him to dispense with common nourishment!

Towards evening, when his frame was really sinking with fatigue, as well as his mind with despair, the Dean of Darlington performed another ceremonious visitation to the dressing-room adjoining Julius's chamber, to fulfil the professional duty of "breaking" to the poor father the sentence of the physicians, that the dawn of another day would not find Julius Egerton alive.

"The instability of human life," said the Dean, with grave serenity, "is a thing, my dear Mr. Egerton, which all prudent men accustom themselves to contemplate: which all Christian men are enabled to contemplate without terror. We are to remember that it is the prerogative of that supreme Providence, by which we are placed in enjoyment of this life, to recall the gift at any hour, at any moment. I cannot, therefore, too strenuously exhort you, my beloved breth—— that is, my dear sir—to submit with becoming humility to a decree which you are only to regard as"——

William Egerton interrupted this studied apostrophe, by a burst of grief not to be controlled by the eloquence of a Dean of Darlington; and for some minutes Nicewig stood silently aloof, sympathizing in the hearty sorrow of the first Egerton in whom he had witnessed a trace of genuine emotion. But as the time drew near when it was convenient for him to drive back to Wyndham, so as not to derange the regular hours and habits of the rectory, Pharaoh's heart was again hardened.

"As it may be essential, my dear sir," said he, in an ominous whisper, approaching William Egerton with a stealthy glide, "to take the necessary steps at a *very* early hour of the morning (an absurd rumour of typhus fever having alarmed the establishment here with fear of infection), may I venture upon the painful duty of inquiring what arrangements you contemplate in case of the mournful event? I am persuaded it would be highly satisfactory to Lord Tiverton to have the remains of a relative so highly valued as your son, repose in the family vault; and during his absence I should not scruple to exercise my privilege so far as to"——

"Wait till the breath is out of my poor boy's body before you talk of burying him!" interrupted William Egerton, in a husky voice, with a look of ferocity such as grief often engenders in the mildest natures. And when the Dean, thus discountenanced, thought it better to take his leave and depart, the unhappy man, on whom he had been inflicting his exhortations, burst into an almost hysterical agony of tears.

"Why did I suffer my boy to quit Helstone! Why did I suffer him to set foot in this heartless place!" cried he. And William went and flung himself on his knees by the bedside; and wept and prayed, as children, confiding in the mercy of their Father who is in heaven, weep and pray beside a dying parent, rather than as a strong man sorrowing over the sickness of a manly son.

But let no one presume to determine what prayers are suffered

to reach the throne of grace, or what to exhale unheard ! The simple offering of Abel was accepted, when the ostentatious sacrifice of Cain remained unblest ; and so it was that, when the Dean of Darlington returned to the Castle at noon the following day, instead of finding his services in request to order the unrolling of the stone from the mouth of the family sepulchre, he learnt from Mrs. Logan that the physicians had announced a highly favourable change—that a crisis had taken place—that the fever was subsiding—that the patient had given tokens of returning consciousness, and his happy father enjoyed a few hours' repose.

To do the Dean justice, his congratulations to William Egerton, when this favourable change became confirmed, were altogether sincere. He had long ceased to entertain any jealousy of Julius, whose insignificance in the eyes of the Tivertons raised him considerably in those of the rector of Wyndham : and he would have regarded a death in the Castle, during the Earl's absence and his own jurisdiction, as an untoward event. It suited him much better that Julius should recover ; and that the Waltons and Davises should learn from the bruitings of his own servants and those of his noble patron, how exemplary had been the attendance of that excellent man, the Dean, upon the sick-bed of his young colleague.

When, at the expiration of many days, Julius became sufficiently himself to understand what was going on, and to rejoice, even to tears, that it was the hand of his kind, good father he found locked in his own, instead of that of one of the menials by whom, at the moment of his seizure, he was alone surrounded, the Dean began to make his visits less frequent. There was something in the pale face and fixed eye of the invalid, which caused him to shrink into himself.

As the convalescence of Julius proceeded, the physicians suggested—perhaps at the Dean's suggestion—that change of air and scene would be highly advantageous ; and, on finding his son's countenance brighten at the proposition, William Egerton resolved that the moment his strength permitted, he should be removed to a milder climate—to his own old southern home.

"Hurley, you know, is quite a little Montpelier," said he, to Singsmall and his learned brother. "I don't wonder my son should have been the worse for his removal to this cold county. I remember, as a child, I was never well at Tiverton Castle. I was always suffering from measles, or scarlet fever, or whooping-cough, or something or other."

Without exactly coinciding in his line of reasoning, the doctors encouraged his opinion. As soon as Julius had strength for the journey, the Egertons departed. It was suggested by the Dean, that the invalid would do well to prepare himself for the attempt by daily airings, for a few days previous, in the park or environs. But Julius shook his head. He would not trust himself to look

again upon the scenes of his self-delusion. He would not even visit Burthwaite—the only place of the neighbourhood where his illness was really cared for; and where the prayers put up for his recovery by the humble curate of Wyndham, had been echoed with heartfelt sincerity by his flock. He would not so much as enter the drawing-room of the Castle, to revive *one* of those half-obliterated associations!

"All is now as it were a dream. I can scarcely believe that such wild visions ever possessed me," mused Julius, as he directed his servant to collect every object belonging to him, to be packed up and forwarded into Kent. "Never again will I set foot in this fated place! Thanks be to Heaven, I was not condemned to breathe my last, and lay my bones in a spot where I should have been as little cared for as a clod of the valley! Thanks be to Heaven, I am spared to return to my own people and my father's house! My prayer is fulfilled. I am permitted to die at home."

The flower-beds of Hurley and shrubberies of Eastwick were bright with their spring crocuses and hepaticas, some three months after the return of the father and son; and the wasted figure of Julius Egerton might occasionally be seen, pacing slowly along the plantations, under the cheering influence of the meridian sunshine.

It was only very recently that he had been judged strong enough for air and exercise; and he now occasionally sauntered into the paddock on his father's arm, labouring to listen while William pointed out the fine points of Blackbird and two new Alderneys who more than rivalled poor Cherry in his affections; or listening in reality to the lively chat of his sister Mary and Georgy Heseltine, as they pursued the discussion of family topics of a highly interesting nature.

In the first place, Captain Egerton and his bride were expected at Hurley House; and the young ladies naturally amused themselves with conjecturing whether John Egerton's rhapsodies concerning the beauty of her eyes, hair, and disposition, had any better foundation than the proverbial blindness of a lover; and in the next, Mary and her friend were actively employed in lending their aid to the fitting up of a snuggerly in the village of Hurley, to which aunt Rachel was about to remove from Helstone Parsonage. Had the mind of Julius been sufficiently at ease to take heed of what was passing around him, he would perhaps have been surprised to find Miss Spry so thoroughly restored to the favour of his sister's lively friend, who seemed to apprehend no evil from having her so near a neighbour. But, in truth, he was himself in perfect charity with poor aunt Rachel; who, on his arrival at home, instead of the upbraidings he had anticipated concerning his grandfather's death as the result of his removal from Helstone, had received him as her darling Julius of former years. Welcoming him as one restored from the dead, she pressed his hand fervently in hers, and bathed it with her tears; nor, throughout his convalescence, had

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she breathed a syllable likely to inflict a wound upon his sensitive feelings.

Little as he was prone to take note of such things, Julius could not but observe that there was a considerable increase of luxury and comfort at Hurley House. A pony-chaise was provided for the use of his mother, no longer so well able to walk as in her earlier years ; and he had the gratification of learning from his father one happy morning, when every face at Hurley looked bright except his own, that the habitation of which they had been so long the tenants, was now their freehold property. William Egerton had just completed the bargain, and Hurley House was his own !

"Next autumn, I shall have my hands full of business," pursued William, in a confidential tone. "I shall take down the lean-to in the stable-yard—which has always been an unsightly thing—and make a new knife-house of what is now the chaise-house ; building a substantial lock-up coach-house on the side towards the kitchen-garden ; and, as it will be a southern aspect, we can cover it with a peach-tree, or a Moor-park, which is your mother's favourite fruit."

"A great improvement, certainly," replied Julius, trying to feel interested in these details.

"Livy has set her heart upon a new dairy, some of these years ; and I have serious thoughts of removing the hedge between Nor' Croft and the lower field," continued William, rubbing his hands, and warming with his projects ; "which will make the view from the parlour windows a charming landscape, by letting in a peep of the Eastwick shrubberies. Nothing will be easier, you know, than to fence the paddock off with iron hurdles, like those we saw at Eridge, whenever I want to divide it. It will not cost above a trifle of fifteen pounds or so, for levelling the ground when the hedge comes to be grubbed up."

Julius, who had never before heard his father allude to the sum of fifteen pounds as a trifle, was almost surprised ; till he recalled to mind that, on his arrival from Tiverton Castle, it had been announced to him that the interest of the forty thousand pounds, amassed in the course of his long and parsimonious life by Dr. Spry, was to be divided between his two daughters during their lives, with benefit of survivorship ; and that, after the death of both, the principle was to be divided, in equal shares, between the children of Mr. and Mrs. William Egerton. Weaned by bitter suffering from all care for the things of this world, he had heard the announcement at first, and he now brought it to his recollection, solely with a view to the additional enjoyments so vast an addition to their fortune would secure to his exemplary parents.

"Surely, my dear father, since so much improvement is needed here," was his inadvertent reply to his exulting companion, "it would have been a more advantageous thing to lay out your

money in the purchase of a more complete place—a more modernized residence?"

William Egerton's cheek reddened. But for the enfeebled condition of the delinquent he would have answered, "Julius, you are the only one of my children capable of suggesting such a sacrilege!" As it was, he contented himself with replying, "When you have attained my years, my dear boy, you will learn to value the force of early associations. You will know that the finest of palaces is not worth the humble home where you have struggled through years of hardship, hand-in-hand with a loving wife. Another home? A better house than Hurley? No, no! there is not its better in this world for me!"

Julius contented himself with pressing his father's hand in reply. He felt at that moment that, in spite of the work-a-day terms in which, like an experienced dairyman, he had just been contrasting the merits of Blackbird and the Suffolk punch, there was more poetry in William Egerton's mind than in the pet laureate of the best annual going—more virtue than in the whole cathedral close of Darlington! He was proud at that moment to be the son of so good a man, so true a philosopher.

Another family secret had still to be imparted to Julius. On his arrival in Kent, he had recognized with surprise in the new rector of Helstone, an acquaintance of his youth—a former pupil of Dr. Spry. He remembered Ned Harrington as a dull, good-humoured boy, the son of a clergyman who possessed a small living in the neighbourhood, and himself destined for the church; and was surprised to find the commonplace lad, on whom, with his own early pretensions to genius, he had looked down as unworthy consideration, developed into an intelligent young man—cheerful, benevolent—attached but not bigoted to his professional duties. He was still more astonished that aunt Rachel should have had discrimination enough to recommend to the favours of the Duke of Pelham an individual so deserving.

In the course of the next month or two, he furthermore observed that the said Edward Harrington had more frequent occasion to ride over from Helstone to Hurley House, than used to occur to himself in the days of his uneasy curateship. But this was natural enough; for he had often refrained from the indulgence in consequence of aunt Rachel's recommendations to him to make up to the Eastwick heiress; while it appeared that Harrington had never from his school-days ceased to be an assiduous visitor at Hurley;—his father's living, to which he officiated as curate, lying at the distance of only a few miles. Julius was not long in discovering that the new rector of Helstone, at least, was not attracted by pretensions to the hand of Miss Heseltine; and the renovated bloom upon poor Mary's cheek was fully accounted for, when William Egerton at length communicated to his son, that aunt Rachel had been the first to discover the origin of her niec

despondency—to applaud the delicacy of the young lovers, which prevented their avowing an attachment likely to call for inconvenient sacrifices from their parents—to institute herself the patroness of Edward Harrington—to recommend him to the church preferment renounced by her nephew; and, finally, to relinquish one half the income she had just inherited from her father, in order to place Mr. and Mrs. Edward Harrington in a position suitable to her notions of parsonic affluence.

“How kind—how noble—how little have I rendered her justice!” cried Julius. “And Mary, too—whom I presumed to fancy had thrown away her affections upon the emptiest of coxcombs!”

“Your mother always said you were too hard upon aunt Rachel,” said William. “She has faults of taste and manner, certainly; but her heart is in the right place. Witness, my dear Julius, the forgiving warmth of her affection for yourself!”

“I scarcely know how she will ever make up her mind to quit Helstone!” observed Julius, insensibly reverting to the former domination under which he had smarted—“a place where she had been living these fifty years!”

“’Twas her own act and deed,” replied his father. “Her former object was to do her duty to the old Doctor, and take care of what he had gathered together, for the sake of those who were to come after him. But when Harrington and Mary wanted her to reside with them at the Parsonage—“No, no,” said she, “that would never do! I’ll be a burden to nobody! Old folks are apt to be troublesome to young people. I’ve lived so long, you see, at the Parsonage, that I should be apt to consider myself still mistress; and then Mary might fancy (as Julius did before her) that I presumed upon having rendered her service. Poor lad! I know I used to plague him out of his wits—chiefly from not understanding his ways. I was sorry for it as soon as his back was turned; and yet, I’ll lay my life, that, if occasion offered, I should not be able to prevent myself interfering again, and giving offence.”

Such was the motive of the strange, but kind-hearted old lady’s removal to Hurley; and the prospect of her residence so near, was a real comfort to Mrs. Egerton, who felt that, after her daughter’s marriage, she should be sadly in want of female companionship. Georgiana Heseltine, though nothing could be higher than their mutual regard, was of too elevated a cast of mind to be consulted concerning the little minutiae of the dairy, or the cutting out of shirts for William and the boys.

“Harrington and Mary have settled that their marriage shall take place in June,” said William, after fully entering into these particulars with his son. “They won’t hear of it a day earlier, because they choose you to be quite well first, to shew a merry face at the wedding, and aunt Rachel to be comfortably settled in her new abode; and it mustn’t be later, because John has only got leave till Midsummer, and the young folks have set their minds on hav-

ing us all assembled. They're even in hopes that Harry may be back in England by that time, for the Ship News in Bell's Messenger announced last week that the Parthenope had got her sailing orders for home. Think, my dear Ju, what pride for your mother and I, to have you all about us at such a moment, and all settled in life to our hearts' content !”

Julius sighed heavily. He had not yet found courage to announce to his father, that the first act of his convalescence was to address a letter to Lord Tiverton, resigning into his hands the living of Burthwaite. William Egerton had every reason to conclude that the original arrangement still held good, and that the curate of Wyndham, for a liberal remuneration, was performing the duty of his son till his perfect recovery ; and the young man dreaded the day when he must announce to his parents that he, the most highly endowed of their children, was once more a burthen upon their fortunes. That he should not long continue so, he was firmly persuaded. Persons the most easily elated are the most readily depressed. The effects of the powerful disease and powerful remedies of which his constitution had received the shock, still weighed upon his spirits ; and as his father, according to his wont, had communicated to the whole neighbourhood the opinion expressed by the physicians both in the north and at Tunbridge Wells, that his son's malady would probably recur in the course of the spring, the air of mournful sympathy which greeted him on all sides, did not tend to raise his cheerfulness or improve his prospects.

There was but one member of the little circle, meanwhile, who had the smallest insight into the origin of Julius Egerton's extraordinary seizure. Connecting the report she had heard from the Mitfords with the sudden departure of the Tiverton family for the Continent, Georgiana Heseltine nothing doubted that the discovery of a clandestine engagement between the cousins had brought down upon the heads of both the indignation of the Earl and Countess. She did not even reveal her suspicions to Mary. She knew that Miss Egerton would as surely betray her confidences to her betrothed, as William Egerton to the whole parish ; and wounded pride rendered it disagreeable to her to hear the name of Julius banded about in connection with that of any other woman.

For Georgiana was beginning to entertain in his favour nearly all her early partiality. Vexed as she had been by his relinquishment of Helstone and departure for the north, she could not see him reappear among them, bowed down as by premature old age with grief, mortification, and disease, without grieving that he should have so severely paid the penalty of the ambition with which she had formerly upbraided him. With sister-like kindness she devoted herself to alleviate his sufferings. Satisfied that he was still secretly engaged to the beloved cousin torn from her

arms by the obduracy of her worldly-minded parents, delicacy no longer restrained her from offering him the most affectionate demonstrations of regard. The spectacle of his attenuated frame and pallid countenance convinced her that no time was to be lost by those who desired to shed a charm around the declining days of Julius Egerton. The playmate of her youth was dying before her eyes; how could she do otherwise than lavish upon him hourly proofs of the cordiality of her friendship?

To own the truth, Julius stood somewhat in need of these attentions. Mary was absorbed in her unlooked-for happiness, William Egerton busy with his improvements, his wife with those of aunt Rachel. Every body had a pressing occupation; there was not one of them at leisure to watch the changes of his countenance, the direction of his eye, to forestal his wishes, or cheer his despondency. All were heartily grieved at his condition; but all only too readily believed that they were promoting his recovery by complying with his entreaties to be left wholly to himself.

Miss Heseltine was deeply touched by the grateful anxiety with which his former Helstone parishioners beset Hurley House with inquiries after the health of their young pastor; bringing with them humble tokens of their duty, homely delicacies, to which they hoped the remembrance of old times might impart a value. She began to reproach herself with having underrated the professional merits of Julius. Had he not been true to his duties, his memory would not have thus vividly survived. She had assuredly been too harsh in her former comments and prognostications; and felt it her business to make an act of atonement by tender forbearance *now*;—by consulting his whims like those of an ailing child; by affording him constant companionship, constant sympathy, reading to him, singing to him, listening to him, and, above all, sitting silent by his side whenever Mary was too much engrossed by a visit from Helstone to spare leisure for the reveries of her brother.

At length, one day, after an interview of more than an hour's duration in the little book-room at Eastwick (in the course of which Julius had scarcely opened his lips, but sat with his eyes filled with tears fixed upon the landscape visible from the windows, as if his thoughts were wandering far away), she ventured, by way of an attempt to break the spell, to murmur the name of "Henrietta;" and that moment the long-repressed stream of Julius Egerton's confidence burst forth. He told her all—as he would have told it to his brother—as he would have told it to his friend; and, as he expected, the generous indignation of Georgiana knew no bounds.

By degrees, however, they arrived at a more tranquil consideration of affairs. Julius did not hesitate to regard his past disappointment and present misery as the just punishment of his for-

mer instability of purpose and worldly-minded ambition ; and in that point Miss Heseltine gainsaid not his judgment. But when he proceeded to describe his self-delusion concerning the supposed attachment of Lady Henrietta as the result of his own vanity, Georgiana chose to suggest other causes for the error.

"Do not tell me that she was unconscious of what was passing in your mind!" cried she. "Lady Henrietta saw through your attachment, or ought to have seen through it. The *naïveté* of a girl educated as she has been, is always to be mistrusted ; and, in *my* opinion, there is no pardon for such want of perception, either in man or woman, as betrays them into practising upon the feelings of other people."

From that day, the ice once broken, the subject was constantly discussed between the young friends ; for Julius had the utmost reliance on Miss Heseltine's sense and feeling, and knew that his confidences were sacred. Whatever she could contrive to learn touching the movements of the Tiverton family, she hastened to communicate to Julius ; who, with the exception of a single cold letter from the Earl, had not received a word of inquiry after his health from any individual bearing his name !

The Dean of Darlington, indeed, wrote to communicate a few particulars concerning arrears due to him from the living of Burthwaite ; and, as the final rupture of Julius with the Tiverton family left him no further anxiety concerning his patron's preference, he condescended to communicate his information in the friendly tone of a man of the world.

"You will be sorry to learn," wrote Nicewig, "that, after all your endeavours to restore Mrs. Vassyll to her husband's roof and her place in society, she has proved wholly undeserving your exertions. Throughout the winter, Cecil Walton (old Walton's second son, a handsome half-pay lieutenant of lancers) has been domesticated with the family at West Hill. The Waltons, of course, are furious ; for, if you remember, they were the only people in the neighbourhood who refused to visit her on her return from her expedition with poor Dick Egerton ; and this *liaison* is supposed by most people to be more an act of revenge than of inclination. Be that as it may, poor Vassyll, after once receiving her back from the arms of a lover, has no remedy. He cannot dismiss her his house, or take legal proceedings : proofs of collusion in a former instance being too strong against him.

"Lord and Lady Tiverton and their family, meanwhile, are amusing themselves vastly at Paris. I hear of nothing but their gaieties. Lady Ismena appears to have been one of the leading beauties this winter at the court of the Tuileries ; and Lady Henrietta's marriage with Lord Orrington (Buchanan's uncle, as you are possibly aware, has been dead these two months) is to take place the end of May, at the close of their year of engagement, as agreed upon. The happy man, however, is already with them

Paris; and, after the wedding, they are to set off on a tour in Switzerland—a fine romantic project for the honeymoon!”

The whole day after receiving this letter Julius remained gloomy and silent. The following morning, he placed it in the hands of Georgiana.

“A tour in Switzerland? So much the better,” said she. “They will probably proceed afterwards to their Irish estates; and your residence at Burthwaite will be unmolested.”

“At Burthwaite? Have I never told you, then, that I had resigned my living?” demanded Julius. “No! I remember thinking that my father had a claim to the earliest information: and I have not yet dared explain a fact which, I fear, will be a bitter disappointment to him. It has, however, escaped me. You know all. Tell me—*should* I have been justifiable in remaining the bond-slave and hiring of those whom I so thoroughly despise?”

“Do not consult *me* on any question of worldly wisdom,” cried Georgiana. “In such points I am ignorant as a child, and could not fail to give bad advice. If you ask me, would *I* have remained incumbent of a living on the presentation and under the influence of such a man as your uncle, I say, ‘No—decidedly no!’ But you must not the less prepare yourself to hear your proceedings blamed by your father and aunt Rachel. It is perhaps unfortunate,” continued Georgiana, averting her face, “that Helstone should be no longer attainable.”

“Helstone? No, no! Mary’s happiness is secured, and every thing is best as it is!” cried he. “I could not be respected there as formerly, after my parishioners had seen me so readily desert them for the lucre of gain.”

“Say, rather, in the petulance of wounded pride,” retorted Georgiana, in a low voice, with one of her former looks of reprehension.

“The only regret remaining to me on that score,” resumed Julius, “is the dread of becoming a burthen to my father. If, however, I should recover, I shall easily find occupation in some retired cure, where my foolish pretensions are unknown. Though late, better than never, I have learnt the difficult virtue of humility; and am content to labour on in obscurity till my great account shall be required.”

At these and still more desponding allusions to his infirm health, the eyes of Georgiana Heseltine were apt to glisten; and she would sit listening to his quickened respiration with a degree of eagerness worthy the affection of Mary Egerton or her mother. Nothing, however, seemed either to divert the attention or raise the spirits of the invalid. It was in vain that aunt Rachel demanded his assistance to furnish her with names and dates, when the moment came for inserting in her favourite Debrett the marriage of Sir Edwin Skiff, of Midge Park, with the Hon. Jane, fifth daughter of Viscount Holwell; and the birth of a son and heir to

the Right Hon. Lady Elizabeth Harley. He could not endure to revert, even remotely, to any person or circumstance connected with his residence at Tiverton Castle.

There was one person, however, who had sufficient influence to obtain a modification of this reluctance. Lord Storby, to whom in the first moments of returning strength Julius had addressed a letter communicating with the utmost delicacy the prospects of his sister, and expressing heartfelt regret that his blindness should have been the cause of disappointment to a friend so valued, was sufficiently struck by Julius's tone of despondency to appeal to his confidence for further explanations.

"For my own share," wrote the Viscount, "now that my first peevish resentments are over, I am willing to admit that I have nothing to complain of. I received no encouragement from dear Mary (at present still allow me to call her so), and, on the first intimation of my intentions, was treated by her with a degree of candour worthy the emulation of her sex. May she be happy! Persuade her, with my affectionate regards, to accept as a friend the man she would not hear of as a husband; and I will endeavour to forgive the Edward Harrington of whom you speak so highly.

"I have been spending the winter here in Paris, my dear fellow, in the midst of a little knot of your friends. In the first place, the Tivertons;—to whom I have abstained from talking of you, because I suspect you have had reserves from me in that quarter, which render it necessary I should have reserves from *them* till you supply me with clearer information. When in Switzerland last autumn, I heard, or read, or dreamt, that the lofty Lady Ismena had hooked a young Duke—Dumbarton, I conclude—whose strawberry-leaves are just now the only ones what the French call *disponible*. But it seems I was mistaken; and that it is her sister who is going to be married, to that piece of sententious impertinence, Buchanan, who was always in St. James's Square; but who seemed to me to make up to Lady Tiverton rather than to her daughter. But I suppose he pursued his courtship *à la Française*. Lady Ismena, on the contrary, so far from achieving a peerage, is actually stooping to Philip Mitford; who, after vainly trying to magnify his paternal estate by a marriage with our lively friend at Eastwick, would fain shelter its insignificance under the emblazoned wings of a ladyship! Lady Tiverton gets as cross as the devil whenever such a thing is hinted at. But I can't help thinking the 'Mitfords of Mitford' will toady her consent out of her; more especially as a broken-down French dandy, the Marquis de Vardes, has lightened the family of one of the tall misses; while a rich *agent de change* (by way of becoming brother-in-law to the Faubourg St. Germain) is making up to the other. Unless a Monsieur le Comte de Something or other should be found, needy enough to nibble in the interim at so small a bait as her five thousand pounds, I really think Vivienne will be the

man ; in which case, being a wondrous adorer of the peerage of all countries, he would perhaps stretch a point to double Philip's income, in the hope of calling cousins with Tiverton Castle. On the other hand, old Mitford, the dilettante, swears he is about to realize a fortune ; having discovered in one of the *bric à brac* warehouses of the Quai Voltaire, the finest Raphael in the universe, which is likely to be purchased for a million or thereabouts, by that penny-wise pound-foolish gentleman, the British government. As to the plausible lady his spouse, her toadyism of Lady Tiverton and her future daughter-in-law is of so treble-distilled a nature, that I have little doubt it will overpower the scruples of the family.

"By the way, Lord Egerton's damper, Sir Gordon Hilfield, who has just run over here from London for the Carnival, swears that the reason your noble kinsman had not leisure to accompany his family to the Continent, was the necessity of keeping guard over the will of the old Duke, your grand-uncle, at Richmond, for fear of being cut out by the apothecary. Dick, to all appearance, is going to exile himself into Siberia, and become patriarch of a horde of Tatars. He is now the faithful, humble servant of a Russian princess, and thinks himself a lucky dog for having slipped his neck out of the Vassyll noose; for though the poor fellow at West Hill, after such remarkable indulgence, cannot, of course, avail himself of the young Cumbrian lieutenant (whom I see mentioned in the papers), as a fireship to blow up his worthless spouse, Dick Egerton would have had her on his hands. Before *his* time, I fancy, there was not the slightest blemish on her character. You certainly did the state of Tiverton Castle some service in assisting him *à se tirer d'affaire*.

"That they should prove ungrateful in return, does not surprise me ; but, if not too painful to you, I should be glad to learn why, whenever your name is mentioned, Lady Tiverton and Ismena begin to fan themselves ; while that indolent, fair-spoken, second girl, looks demurely conscious ? Write to me, at all events. Let my name be, in your flowing cups at Hurley, freshly remembered ; and tell Miss Heseltine, that if I do not foresee a happy termination to her faithful attachment for one of the most graceless of Egertons, I would hurry over to Eastwick, and try to make her marry me herself. She is a fine, intelligent, open-hearted creature, calculated to secure the happiness of any right-thinking man."

Such was the letter which called forth from poor Julius the most ample explanations. The passage relating to the Vassylls stung him to the quick. He felt the full extent of his guilt in having, for expedience' sake, abetted the dishonour of an honest man.

"You are right, my dear Storby," wrote he in reply. "The influence of these people, and of my own idle ambition, *did* render me heartless and callous—*did* deaden every noble principle and

better feeling of my soul. In the wantonness of self-confidence, while presuming to instruct others, I became an easy prey to temptation. The profession, adopted *not* from conviction or vocation, but as a means of rising in the world, had in me a most unworthy representative. But I have flung aside my responsibility; and while there are other modes of rendering my scholarship available, neither the compliments of a Silas Vivian, nor the preferment of my uncle the Earl, shall tempt me to engage in duties for which I know myself incompetent.

"With respect to your hint about Miss Heseltine, lose no time, my dear friend, in coming over, and giving to my sister so worthy a successor in your regard. You will blight no prospects of mine. Though Georgiana is every thing that is good and charming, I have now grovelled too bitterly in the dust to add to the presumption of having pretended to the hand of a woman of rank, that of aspiring to the hand of a woman of fortune."

Julius felt almost inclined to communicate to Miss Heseltine the hint thrown out by Lord Storby. But the society of Georgiana was becoming too essential to his daily happiness, to hazard the loss of her confidence by recommending a marriage of ambition with the man rejected by his sister.

Meanwhile, Georgiana suggested in her turn that he ought not to keep his father in ignorance of a fact which some accidental circumstance might disclose with far less grace than if communicated, with fitting explanations, by the lips of his son.

"I have not courage for the avowal," murmured Julius, with one of his desponding looks. "Time will explain all!"

"Consult Mr. Harrington. He will, perhaps, undertake the explanation for you," suggested Georgiana.

"I never see Harrington alone. When he is expected at Hurley, my father is in waiting for him at the end of the lane, and Mary at the garden gate."

"Why not visit him at Helstone? I have heard him press you a thousand times to go and see what he is doing at the Parsonage."

A vivid flush overspread the cheeks of Julius, but he uttered not a word.

"I see how it is!" cried Georgiana, with a reproachful smile. "Something of the old leaven is yet remaining. You are too proud to present yourself among your parishioners. You fancy your whole history painted on your face. Julius, this is unworthy of you!"

"It is so—and I will surmount the feeling!" was his resolute reply.

"My father and I have a visit to pay to the Smyths at Helstone Park," she continued. "You must drive over with us, and spend a few days with your brother-in-law. The change of air and scene will be of service to you. Do you promise me?"

"You are too good, in troubling yourself to dispose of me," was

the reply of Julius Egerton. And a few days afterwards, almost against his will, he found himself the inmate of his brother-in-law.

Although this visit to Helstone probed to the quick the wounded pride of Julius Egerton, it tended to restore him to a happier frame of mind. Harrington was a simple-hearted, strong-minded, practical man ; attached to his duties without any morbid misgivings touching his manner of discharging them. He meant well, acted up to his intentions, and trusted to the goodness of God to prosper his endeavours. Not half so popular as his predecessor, he was more respected.

"I had some difficulty in bringing down their appetite to my wheaten bread, after you had dieted them so long on cakes and ale," said Harrington good-humouredly to his brother-in-law ; "but, convinced that such bread is the staff of life, I persevered till they were persuaded to be satisfied. They loved *you* better, my dear Egerton, than they will ever love me, and were perhaps prouder of you ; but I suspect my influence over their conduct is stronger than yours."

"You are in the right path," said Julius, earnestly, in reply. "It is not of your own illustration you are thinking, either in the pulpit or elsewhere. Go on, and prosper."

The improvements effected by Harrington in the old Parsonage, met with similar approval. Nothing had been done to injure its quaint simplicity. The awkward wing, containing the school-house added by Dr. Spry, was pulled down, and the ground planted over with a shrubbery ; and Julius felt grateful to his successor for having duly respected the gay flower-gardens, sloping to the river, the creation of his own happier years.

With aunt Rachel's assistance, the whole house had been thoroughly repaired and neatly refurnished. It was now all that a Parsonage ought to be—simple, commodious, cheerful—proving the inmates to be content with the things of this world, without losing sight of those of a better.

Julius stood convicted. He saw that Harrington and Mary were worthier than himself to preside over the village of Helstone. They would be more practically useful—they would afford a better example. He should have been unable to restrain his ambitions within that narrow sphere !

Meanwhile, as regarded the object of his visit, Harrington perfectly coincided with Georgiana Heseltine, that no time should be lost in apprising William Egerton of the position of the affairs of his son ; he even proposed returning with him to Hurley, for the purpose of facilitating the disclosure.

To the great surprise of both, the kind father, on receiving his son's confession, acknowledged that for two months past he had been fully apprised of every circumstance connected with Julius's illness, and the spirited self-sacrifice which had marked his sense of injury !

"Soon after your return here, Tiverton wrote me a harsh, unfeeling letter on the subject," said he; "a letter which I instantly committed to the flames, resolving to efface every thing connected with the business from my recollection. Let us revert to it no more. When I was your age, my dear Ju, I suspect I should have acted as you have done. As it is, all that remains for you is to get well—perfectly well—and in due time you will become perfectly happy, like the rest of us. Time enough *then* to hit upon some scheme for your future establishment in life."

Having been curtain-lectured into discretion by his worthy wife, William Egerton forbore to add that Captain Heseltine had recently made a formal avowal to his friends at Hurley House, of his conviction of the attachment entertained by his daughter for her old playmate.

"So wrapt up as I am in my pursuits," said the simple-hearted old gentleman, "maybe I might never have seen what was going on under my eyes, if Miss Rachel (who, truth to say, is a woman of exceeding discernment) had not enlightened me. But now nothing is clearer than that Georgy will go on refusing and refusing offer after offer, till she grows into a right-down old maid; unless Julius should get over his whimsies, first about lords' daughters, and next about disinterestedness and disparity of means, which, after all, evince a very shabby consideration for distinctions of fortune."

"At all events," was Mrs. Egerton's prudent rejoinder, "since you are so generously disposed towards my son, believe me, the surest way of promoting a good understanding between the young people is to leave them to themselves. They will work out a speedier insight into each other's views and affections."

So confident was her worthy husband that Livy's advice would be the means of bringing matters into train, that he experienced no further anxiety touching the fortunes of Julius. The happy courtship proceeding at Hurley House, the arrival of John and his pretty bride, and the officious jokes of aunt Rachel, afforded a perpetual commentary upon the possibility of transplanting human affections from an ungrateful to a fruitful soil; and Georgiana Heseltine, amidst the preoccupation of the brother and sister, was so kind, and Julius so grateful for her kindness, that nothing but his independence of mind prevented his avowing himself sensible of her superior merits and attractions.

The arrival of the young sailor to enjoy a month's holiday at Hurley, before proceeding in the command of his brig to the Baltic station, was destined to bring him to reason.

"'Tis vastly provoking!" cried Captain Heseltine, in reply to Harry Egerton's offer of a passage. "For the last ten years I've set my heart upon a visit to Abo! I want to visit Upsal, too, and get a peep at the tomb of Linnæus, and ascertain whether Laing may be trusted. And now that the opportunity offers"

sailing with this dear boy—almost a child of my own—I can't leave home forsooth, because of the unprotected state of my daughter!"

"You must wait till Miss Heseltine is married," observed the young Captain, with a knowing smile.

"*She* marry?—I begin to think she'll *never* marry!" cried the angry geographer, thoroughly out of patience. "Georgy has refused half Kent and a quarter of Sussex, to say nothing of fine gentlemen from town, past reckoning, for love of an ungrateful fellow who cares none the more for her for seeing her willing to put up with his odd fancies, and her old father anxious for nothing on this side the grave but to marry her into the family he respects most in the world. But I'm forgetting, my dear lad, that Julius is your brother. However, 'tis no fault of yours that he chooses to be blind and obstinate."

It was not Harry Egerton's fault much longer. The cobweb delicacies of life torn down by his well-meaning impetuosity, the young people began to see things in their true light; and to admit that there was no occasion for remaining miserable apart, when they might be happy together.

The smart of Julius Egerton's previous mortifications had been long forgotten, when, early in the autumn, two happy marriages were solemnized at Hurley House; destined to unite in still closer bonds of regard the three households of Helstone, Hurley, and Eastwick Lodge.

All the flower-gardens of the country round were rilled to strew the paths of two of the most popular brides ever cheered to the altar by the love and confidence of their families, the respect of their dependants, and the fervent blessings of the poor.

The sun shone brightly that day on Hurley House!—Blackbird and her companions lay basking in the green pastures at the point nearest the Eastwick shrubberies, as if conscious of the new bond of association between the premises, which called forth the hilarity of their kind-hearted master. All the world agreed over the wedding-cake, that such worthy people as William Egerton and his wife deserved the happiness crowning them in their children; and even aunt Rachel, though secretly mortified that the two marriages afforded her such shabby particulars to interpolate in her favourite volumes, admitted that Livy and her husband were elevated to higher honour by their domestic virtues than by the accident of noble birth; and that the young people had risen higher in the world by their own merits, than if advanced to preferment by the patronage of their UNCLE THE EARL.

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| VIII. From the Falls of Buk'ah to the Fourth Camping Place upon the Jordan. | XIX. Jerusalem. |
| IX. From the Fourth Camp on the Jordan to the Ford of Suk'wā. | XX. From Jerusalem to Jaffa. |
| X. From Ford of Suk'wā to Pilgrim's Ford. | XXI. From Jaffa to Nazareth. |
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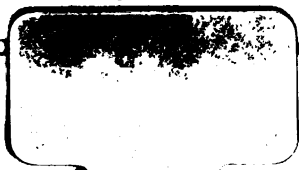
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